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TALES OF MY LANDLORD.

Fourth and Last Series.

TALES OF MY LANDLORD,

Fourth and Last Series,

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED

BY

JEDEDIAH CLEISHBOTHAM,

SCHOOLMASTER AND PARISH-CLERK OF GANDERCLEUCH.

The European with the Asian shore—
Sophia's cupola with golden gleam—
The cypress groves—Olympus high and hoar—
The twelve isles, and the more than I could dream,
Far less describe, present the very view
That charm'd the charming Mary Montagu.

Don Juan.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS.

COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS.

CHAPTER I.

The parties met. The wily, wordy Greek,
Weighing each word, and canvassing each syllable;
Evading, arguing, equivocating.
And the stern Frank came with his two-hand sword,
Watching to see which way the balance sways,
That he may throw it in, and turn the scales.

Palestine.

At a signal made by Agelastes, the door of this romantic retreat was opened by Diogenes, the negro slave, to whom our readers have been already introduced; nor did it escape the wily old man, that the Count and his lady testified some wonder at his form and lineaments, being the first African perhaps whom they had ever seen so closely. The philosopher lost not the opportunity of making an impression on their minds, by a display of the superiority of his knowledge.

"This poor being," he observed, "is of the race of Ham, the undutiful son of Noah; for his transgressions against his parent, he was banished to the sands of Africa, and was condemned to be the father of a race doomed to be the slaves of the issue of his more dutiful brethren."

The knight and his lady gazed on the wonderful appearance before them, and did not, it may be believed, think of doubting the information, which was so much of a piece with their prejudices, while their opinion of their host was greatly augmented by the supposed extent of his knowledge.

"It gives pleasure to a man of humanity," continued Agelastes, "when, in old age or sickness, we must employ the services of others, which is at other times scarce lawful, to choose his assistants out of a race of beings, hewers of wood and drawers of water—from their birth upwards destined to slavery; and to whom, therefore, by employing them as slaves, we render no injury, but carry into effect, in a slight degree, the intentions of the Great Being who made us all."

"Are there many of a race," said the Coun-

tess, "so singularly unhappy in their destination? I have hitherto thought the stories of black men as idle as those which minstrels tell of fairies and ghosts."

"Do not believe so," said the philosopher; "the race is numerous as the sand of the sea, neither are they altogether unhappy in discharging the duties which their fate has allotted them. Those who are of worse character suffer even in this life the penance due to their guilt; they become the slaves of the cruel and tyrannical, are beaten, starved, and mutilated. To those whose moral characters are better, better masters are provided, who share with their slaves, as with their children, food and raiment, and the other good things which they themselves enjoy. To some, Heaven allots the favour of kings and of conquerors, and to a few, but those the chief favourites of the species, hath He assigned a place in the mansions of philosophy, where, by availing themselves of the lights which their masters can afford, they gain a prospect into that world which is the residence of true happiness."

"Methinks I understand you," replied the

Countess; "and if so, I ought rather to envy our sable friend here than to pity him, for having been allotted in the partition of his kind to the possession of his present master, from whom, doubtless, he has acquired the desirable knowledge which you mention."

"He learns, at least," said Agelastes, modestly, "what I can teach, and, above all, to be contented wtth his situation.—Diogenes, my good child," said he, changing his address to the slave, "thou seest I have company—What does the poor hermit's larder afford, with which he may regale his honoured guests?"

Hitherto they had advanced no farther than a sort of outer room, or hall of entrance, fitted up with no more expense than might have suited one who desired at some outlay, and more taste, to avail himself of the ancient building for a sequestered and private retirement. The chairs and couches were covered with Eastern wove mats, and were of the simplest and most primitive form. But on touching a spring, an interior apartment was displayed, which had considerable pretension to splendour and magnificence.

The furniture and hangings of this apartment were of straw-coloured silk, wrought on the looms of Persia, and crossed with embroidery, which produced a rich, yet simple effect. The ceiling was carved in arabesque, and the four corners of the apartment were formed into recesses for statuary, which had been produced in a better age of the art than that which existed at the period of our story. In one nook, a shepherd seemed to withdraw himself, as if ashamed to produce his scantily-covered person, while he was willing to afford the audience the music of the reed which he held in his hand. Three damsels, resembling the Graces in the beautiful proportions of their limbs, and the slender clothing which they wore, lurked in different attitudes, each in her own niche, and seemed but to await the first sound of the music, to bound forth from thence and join in the frolic dance. The subject was beautiful, yet somewhat light, to ornament the study of such a sage as Agelastes represented himself.

He seemed to be sensible that this might attract observation.—"These figures," he said,

"executed at the period of the highest excellence of Grecian art, were considered of old as the choral nymphs assembled to adore the goddess of the place, waiting but the music to join in the worship of the temple. And, in truth, the wisest may be interested in seeing how near to animation the genius of these wonderful men could bring the inflexible marble. Allow but for the absence of the divine afflatus, or breath of animation, and an unenlightened heathen might suppose the miracle of Prometheus was about to be realized. But we," said he, looking upwards, "are taught to form a better judgment between what man can do and the productions of the Deity."

Some subjects of natural history were painted on the walls, and the philosopher fixed the attention of his guests upon the half-reasoning elephant, of which he mentioned several anecdotes, which they listened to with great eagerness.

A distant strain was here heard, as if of music in the woods, penetrating by fits through the hoarse roar of the cascade, which, as it sunk immediately below the windows, filled the apartment with its deep voice.

"Apparently," said Agelastes, "the friends whom I expect are approaching, and bring with them the means of enchanting another sense. It is well they do so, since wisdom tells us that we best honour the Deity by enjoying the gifts he has provided us."

These words called the attention of the philosopher's Frankish guests to the preparations exhibited in this tasteful saloon. These were made for an entertainment in the manner of the ancient Romans, and couches, which were laid beside a table ready decked, announced that the male guests, at least, were to assist at the banquet in the usual recumbent posture of the ancients; while seats, placed among the couches, seemed to say that females were expected, who would observe the Grecian customs, in eating seated. The preparations for good cheer were such as, though limited in extent, could scarce be excelled in quality, either by the splendid dishes which decked Trimalchio's banquet of former days, or the lighter delicacies of Grecian cookery, or the succulent and highly-spiced messes indulged in by the nations of the East, to whichever they hap-

pened to give the preference; and it was with an air of some vanity that Agelastes asked his guests to share a poor pilgrim's meal.

"We care little for dainties," said the Count; "nor does our present course of life as pilgrims, bound by a vow, allow us much choice on such subjects. Whatever is food for soldiers, suffices the Countess and myself; for, with our will, we would at every hour be ready for battle, and the less time we use in preparing for the field, it is even so much the better. Sit then, Brenhilda, since the good man will have it so, and let us lose no time in refreshment, lest we waste that which should be otherwise employed."

"A moment's forgiveness," said Agelastes, "until the arrival of my other friends, whose music you may now hear is close at hand, and who will not long, I may safely promise, divide you from your meal."

"For that," said the Count, "there is no haste; and since you seem to account it a part of civil manners, Brenhilda and I can with ease postpone our repast, unless you will permit us, what I own would be more pleasing, to take a

morsel of bread and a cup of water presently; and, thus refreshed, to leave the space clear for your more curious and more familiar guests."

"The saints above forbid!" said Agelastes; "guests so honoured never before pressed these cushions, nor could do so, if the sacred family of the imperial Alexius himself even now stood at the gate."

He had hardly uttered these words, when the full-blown peal of a trumpet, louder in a tenfold degree than the strains of music they had before heard, was now sounded in the front of the temple, piercing through the murmur of the waterfall, as a Damascus blade penetrates the armour, and assailing the ears of the hearers, as the sword pierces the flesh of him who wears the harness.

"You seem surprised or alarmed, father," said Count Robert. "Is there danger near, and do you distrust our protection?"

"No," said Agelastes, "that would give me confidence in any extremity; but these sounds excite awe, not fear. They tell me that some of the imperial family are about to be my guests.

Yet fear nothing, my noble friends—they, whose look is life, are ready to shower their favours with profusion upon strangers so worthy of honour as they will see here. Meantime, my brow must touch my threshold, in order duly to welcome them." So saying, he hurried to the outer door of the building.

"Each land has its customs," said the Count, as he followed his host, with his wife hanging on his arm; "but, Brenhilda, as they are so various, it is little wonder that they appear unseemly to each other. Here, however, in deference to my entertainer, I stoop my crest, in the manner which seems to be required." So saying, he followed Agelastes into the anteroom, where a new scene awaited them.

CHAPTER II.

AGELASTES gained his threshold before Count Robert of Paris and his lady. He had, therefore, time to make his prostrations before a huge animal, then unknown to the western world, but now universally distinguished as the elephant. On its back was a pavilion, or palanquin, within which were enclosed the august persons of the Empress Irene, and her daughter Anna Comnena. Nicephorus Briennius attended the Princesses in the command of a gallant body of light horse, whose splendid armour would have given more pleasure to the crusader, if it had possessed less an air of useless wealth and effeminate magnificence. But the effect which it produced in its appearance was as brilliant as could well be conceived. The officers alone of

this *corps de garde* followed Nicephorus to the platform, prostrated themselves while the ladies of the Imperial house descended, and rose up again under a cloud of waving plumes and flashing lances, when they stood secure upon the platform in front of the building. Here the somewhat aged, but commanding, form of the Empress, and the still juvenile beauties of the fair historian, were seen to great advantage. In the front of a deep back-ground of spears and waving crests, stood the sounder of the sacred trumpet, conspicuous by his size and the richness of his apparel; he kept his post on a rock above the stone staircase, and, by an occasional note of his instrument, intimated to the squadrons beneath that they should stay their progress, and attend the motions of the Empress and the wife of the Cæsar.

The fair form of the Countess Brenhilda, and the fantastic appearance of her half-masculine garb, attracted the attention of the ladies of Alexius' family, but was too extraordinary to command their admiration. Agelastes became sensible there was a necessity that he should introduce

his guests to each other, if he desired they should meet on satisfactory terms. "May I speak," he said, "and live? The armed strangers whom you find now with me are worthy companions of those myriads, whom zeal for the suffering inhabitants of Palestine has brought from the western extremity of Europe, at once to enjoy the countenance of Alexius Comnenus, and to aid him, since it pleases him to accept their assistance, in expelling the Paynims from the bounds of the sacred empire, and garrison those regions in their stead, as vassals of his Imperial Majesty."

"We are pleased," said the Empress, "worthy Agelastes, that you should be kind to those who are disposed to be so reverent to the Emperor. And we are rather disposed to talk with them ourselves, that our daughter (whom Apollo hath gifted with the choice talent of recording what she sees) may become acquainted with one of those female warriors of the West, of whom we have heard so much by common fame, and yet know so little with certainty."

"Madam," said the Count, "I can but rudely express to you what I have to find fault with in

the explanation which this old man hath given of our purpose in coming hither. Certain it is, we neither owe Alexius fealty, nor had we the purpose of paying him any, when we took the vow upon ourselves which brought us against Asia. We came, because we understood that the Holy Land had been torn from the Greek Emperor by the Pagans, Saracens, Turks, and other infidels, from whom we are come to win it back. The wisest and most prudent among us have judged it necessary to acknowledge the Emperor's authority, since there was no such safe way of passing to the discharge of our vow, as that of acknowledging fealty to him, as the best mode of preventing quarrels among Christian states. We, though independent of any earthly king, do not pretend to be greater men than they, and therefore have condescended to pay the same homage."

The Empress coloured several times with indignation in the course of this speech, which, in more passages than one, was at variance with those imperial maxims of the Grecian court, which held its dignity so high, and plainly in-

timated a tone of opinion which was depreciating to the Emperor's power. But the Empress Irene had received instructions from her imperial spouse to beware how she gave, or even took, any ground of quarrel with the crusaders, who, though coming in the appearance of subjects, were, nevertheless, too punctilious and ready to take fire, to render them safe discussers of delicate differences. She made a graceful reverence accordingly, as if she had scarce understood what the Count de Paris had explained so bluntly.

At this moment the appearance of the principal persons on either hand attracted, in a wonderful degree, the attention of the other party, and there seemed to exist among them a general desire of further acquaintance, and, at the same time, a manifest difficulty in expressing such a wish.

Agelastes—to begin with the master of the house—had risen from the ground indeed, but without venturing to assume an upright posture; he remained before the Imperial ladies with his body and head still bent, his hand interposed between his eyes and their faces, like a man that

would shade his eyesight from the level sun, and awaited in silence the commands of those to whom he seemed to think it disrespectful to propose the slightest action, save by testifying in general, that his house and his slaves were at their unlimited command. The Countess of Paris, on the other hand, and her warlike husband, were the peculiar objects of curiosity to Irene, and her accomplished daughter, Anna Comnena; and it occurred to both these Imperial ladies, that they had never seen finer specimens of human strength and beauty; but, by a natural instinct, they preferred the manly bearing of the husband to that of the wife, which seemed to her own sex rather too haughty and too masculine to be altogether pleasing.

Count Robert and his lady had also their own object of attention in the newly arrived group, and, to speak truth, it was nothing else than the peculiarities of the monstrous animal which they now saw, for the first time, employed as a beast of burden in the service of the fair Irene and her daughter. The dignity and splendour of the elder Princess, the grace and vivacity of the younger, were alike lost in Brenhilda's ear-

nest enquiries into the history of the elephant, and the use which it made of its trunk, tusks, and huge ears, upon different occasions.

Another person who took a less direct opportunity to gaze on Brenhilda with a deep degree of interest, was the Cæsar, Nicephorus. This Prince kept his eye as steadily upon the Frankish Countess as he could well do, without attracting the attention, and exciting perhaps the suspicions, of his wife and mother-in-law; he therefore endeavoured to restore speech to an interview which would have been awkward without it. "It is possible," he said, "beautiful Countess, that this being your first visit to the Queen of the World, you have never hitherto seen the singularly curious animal called the elephant."

"Pardon me," said the Countess, "I have been treated by this learned gentleman to a sight, and some account, of that wonderful creature."

By all who heard this observation, the Lady Brenhilda was supposed to have made a satirical thrust at the philosopher himself, who, in the imperial court, usually went by the name of the Elephant.

"No one could describe the beast more accurately than Agelastes," said the Princess, with a smile of intelligence, which went round her attendants.

"He knows its docility, its sensibility, and its fidelity," said the philosopher in a subdued tone.

"True, good Agelastes," said the Princess; "we should not criticise the animal which kneels to take us up.—Come, lady of a foreign land," she continued, turning to the Frank Count, and especially his Countess—"and you her gallant lord! When you return to your native country, you shall say you have seen the Imperial family partake of their food, and in so far acknowledge themselves to be of the same clay with other mortals, sharing their poorest wants, and relieving them in the same manner."

"That, gentle lady, I can well believe," said Count Robert; "my curiosity would be more indulged by seeing this strange animal at his food."

"You will see the elephant more conveniently at his mess within doors," answered the Princess, looking at Agelastes.

"Lady," said Brenhilda, "I would not willingly refuse an invitation given in courtesy, but the sun has waxed low unnoticed, and we must return to the city."

"Be not afraid," said the fair historian; "you shall have the advantage of our Imperial escort to protect you in your return."

"Fear?—afraid?—escort?—protect?—These are words I know not. Know, lady, that my husband, the noble Count of Paris, is my sufficient escort; and even were he not with me, Brenhilda de Aspramonte fears nothing, and can defend herself."

"Fair daughter," said Agelastes, "if I may be permitted to speak, you mistake the gracious intentions of the Princess, who expresses herself as to a lady of her own land. What she desires is to learn from you some of the most marked habits and manners of the Franks, of which you are so beautiful an example, and in return for such information, the illustrious Princess would be glad to procure your entrance to those spacious collections, where animals from all corners of the habitable world have been assembled at the com-

mand of our Emperor Alexius, as if to satisfy the wisdom of those sages to whom all creation is known, from the deer so small in size that it is exceeded by an ordinary rat, to that huge and singular inhabitant of Africa that can browse on the tops of trees that are forty feet high, while the length of its hind legs does not exceed the half of that wondrous height."

"It is enough," said the Countess, with some eagerness; but Agelastes had got a point of discussion after his own mind.

"There is also," he said, "that huge lizard, which, resembling in shape the harmless inhabitant of the moors of other countries, is in Egypt a monster thirty feet in length, clothed in impenetrable scales, and moaning over his prey when he catches it, with the hope and purpose of drawing others within its danger, by mimicking the lamentations of humanity."

"Say no more, father!" exclaimed the lady. "My Robert, we will go—will we not, where such objects are to be seen?"

"There is also," said Agelastes, who saw that he would gain his point by addressing himself to

the curiosity of the strangers, "the huge animal, wearing on its back an invulnerable vestment, having on its nose a horn, and sometimes two, the folds of whose hide are of the most immense thickness, and which never knight was able to wound."

"We will go, Robert—will we not?" reiterated the Countess.

"Ay," replied the Count, "and teach these Easterns how to judge of a knight's sword, by a single blow of my trusty Tranchefer."

"And who knows," said Brenhilda, "since this is a land of enchantment, but what some person, who is languishing in a foreign shape, may have their enchantment unexpectedly dissolved by a stroke of the good weapon?"

"Say no more, father!" exclaimed the Count. "We will attend this Princess, since such she is, were her whole escort bent to oppose our passage, instead of being by her command to be our guard. For know, all who hear me, thus much of the nature of the Franks, that when you tell us of danger and difficulties, you give us the same desire to travel the road where they

lie, as other men have in seeking either pleasure or profit in the paths in which such are to be found."

As the Count pronounced these words, he struck his hand upon his Tranchefer, as an illustration of the manner in which he purposed upon occasion to make good his way. The courtly circle startled somewhat at the clash of steel, and the fiery look of the chivalrous Count Robert. The Empress indulged her alarm by retreating into the inner apartment of the pavilion.

With a grace, which was rarely deigned to any but those in close alliance with the Imperial family, Anna Comnena took the arm of the noble Count. "I see," she said, "that the Imperial Mother has honoured the house of the learned Agelastes, by leading the way; therefore, to teach you Grecian breeding must fall to my share." Saying this, she conducted him to the inner apartment.

"Fear not for your wife," she said, as she noticed the Frank look round; "our husband, like ourselves, has pleasure in showing attention

to the stranger, and will lead the Countess to our board. It is not the custom of the Imperial family to eat in company with strangers; but we thank Heaven for having instructed us in that civility, which can know no degradation in dispensing with ordinary rules to do honour to strangers of such merit as yours. I know it will be my mother's request, that you will take your places without ceremony; and also, although the grace be somewhat particular, I am sure that it will have my Imperial father's approbation."

"Be it as your ladyship lists," said Count Robert. "There are few men to whom I would yield place at the board, if they had not gone before me in the battle-field. To a lady, especially so fair a one, I willingly yield my place, and bend my knee whenever I have the good hap to meet her."

The Princess Anna, instead of feeling herself awkward in the discharge of the extraordinary, and, as she might have thought it, degrading office of ushering a barbarian chief to the banquet, felt, on the contrary, flattered, at having bent to her purpose a heart so obstinate as that

of Count Robert, and elated, perhaps, with a certain degree of satisfied pride while under his momentary protection.

The Empress Irene had already seated herself at the head of the table. She looked with some astonishment, when her daughter and son-in-law, taking their seats at her right and left hand, invited the Count and Countess of Paris, the former to recline, the latter to sit at the board, in the places next to themselves; but she had received the strictest orders from her husband to be deferential in every respect to the strangers, and did not think it right, therefore, to interpose any ceremonious scruples.

The Countess took her seat, as indicated, beside the Cæsar; and the Count, instead of reclining in the mode of the Grecian men, also seated himself in the European fashion by the princess.

"I will not lie prostrate," said he, laughing, "except in consideration of a blow weighty enough to compel me to do so; nor then either, if I am able to start up and return it."

The service of the table then began, and, to

say truth, it appeared to be an important part of the business of the day. The officers who attended to perform their several duties of deckers of the table, sewers of the banquet, removers and tasters to the Imperial family, thronged into the banqueting room, and seemed to vie with each other in calling upon Agelastes for spices, condiments, sauces, and wines of various kinds, the variety and multiplicity of their demands being apparently devised, *ex preposito*, for stirring the patience of the philosopher. But Agelastes, who had anticipated most of their requests, however unusual, supplied them completely, or in the greatest part, by the ready agency of his active slave Diogenes, to whom, at the same time, he contrived to transfer all blame for the absence of such articles as he was unable to provide.

"Be Homer my witness, the accomplished Virgil, and the curious felicity of Horace, that, trifling and unworthy as this banquet was, my note of directions to this thrice-unhappy slave gave the instructions to procure every ingredient necessary to convey to each dish its proper

gusto.—Ill-omened carrion that thou art, wherefore placedst thou the pickled cucumber so far apart from the boar's head? and why are these superb congers unprovided with a requisite quantity of fennel? The divorce betwixt the shell-fish and the Chian wine, in a presence like this, is worthy of the divorce of thine own soul from thy body; or, to say the least, of a life-long's residence in the Pistrinum." While thus the philosopher proceeded with threats, curses, and menaces against his slave, the stranger might have an opportunity of comparing the little torrent of his domestic eloquence, which the manners of the times did not consider as ill-bred, with the louder and deeper share of adulation towards his guests. They mingled like the oil with the vinegar and pickles which Diogenes mixed for the sauce. Thus the Count and Countess had an opportunity to estimate the happiness and the felicity reserved for those slaves, whom the omnipotent Jupiter, in the plenitude of compassion for their state, and in guerdon of their good morals, had dedicated to the service of a philosopher. The share they themselves

took in the banquet, was finished with a degree of speed which gave surprise not only to their host, but also to the Imperial guests.

The Count helped himself carelessly out of a dish which stood near him, and partaking of a draught of wine, without enquiring whether it was of the vintage which the Greeks held it matter of conscience to mingle with that species of food, he declared himself satisfied; nor could the obliging entreaties of his neighbour, Anna Comnena, induce him to partake of other messes represented as being either delicacies or curiosities. His spouse eat still more moderately of the food which seemed most simply cooked, and stood nearest her at the board, and partook of a cup of crystal water, which she slightly tinged with wine, at the persevering entreaty of the Cæsar. They then relinquished the farther business of the banquet, and, leaning back upon their seats, occupied themselves in watching the liberal credit done to the feast by the rest of the guests present.

A modern synod of gourmands would hardly have equalled the Imperial family of Greece

seated at a philosophical banquet, whether in the critical knowledge displayed of the science of eating in all its branches, or in the practical cost and patience with which they exercised it. The ladies, indeed, did not eat much of any one dish, but they tasted of almost all that were presented to them, and their name was Legion. Yet, after a short time, in Homeric phrase, the rage of thirst and hunger was assuaged, or, more probably, the Princess Anna Comnena was tired of being an object of some inattention to the guest who sat next her, and who, joining his high military character to his very handsome presence, was a person by whom few ladies would willingly be neglected. There is no new guise, says our father Chaucer, but what resembles an old one; and the address of Anna Comnena to the Frankish Count might resemble that of a modern lady of fashion, in her attempts to engage in conversation the *exquisite*, who sits by her side in an apparently absent fit. "We have piped unto you," said the Princess, "and you have not danced! We have sung to you the jovial chorus of *Evoe*, *evoe*, and

you will neither worship Comus nor Bacchus! Are we then to judge you a follower of the Muses, in whose service, as well as in those of Phœbus, we ourselves pretend to be enlisted?"

"Fair lady," replied the Frank, "be not offended at my stating once for all, in plain terms, that I am a Christian man, spitting at, and bidding defiance to, Apollo, Bacchus, Comus, and all other heathen deities whatsoever."

"O! cruel interpretation of my unwary words!" said the Princess; "I did but mention the gods of music, poetry, and eloquence, worshipped by our divine philosophers, and whose names are still used to distinguish the arts and sciences over which they presided—and the Count interprets it seriously into a breach of the second commandment! Our Lady preserve me, we must take care how we speak, when our words are so sharply interpreted."

The Count laughed as the Princess spoke. "I had no offensive meaning, madam," he said, "nor would I wish to interpret your words otherwise than as being most innocent and praiseworthy. I shall suppose that your speech

contained all that was fair and blameless. You are, I have understood, one of those who, like our worthy host, express in composition the history and feats of the warlike time in which you live, and give to the posterity which shall succeed us, the knowledge of the brave deeds which have been achieved in our day. I respect the task to which you have dedicated yourself, and know not how a lady could lay after ages under an obligation to her in the same degree, unless, like my wife, Brenhilda, she were herself to be the actress of deeds which she recorded. And, by the way, she now looks towards her neighbour at the table, as if she were about to rise and leave him; her inclinations are towards Constantinople, and, with your ladyship's permission, I cannot allow her to go thither alone."

"That you shall neither of you do," said Anna Comnena; "since we all go to the capital directly, and for the purpose of seeing those wonders of nature, of which numerous examples have been collected by the splendour of my Imperial father.—If my husband seems to have given offence to the Countess, do not suppose that it was

intentionally dealt to her; on the contrary, you will find the good man, when you are better acquainted with him, to be one of those simple persons who manage so unhappily what they mean for civilities, that those to whom they are addressed receive them frequently in another sense."

The Countess of Paris, however, refused again to sit down to the table from which she had risen, so that Agelastes and his Imperial guests saw themselves under the necessity either to permit the strangers to depart, which they seemed unwilling to do, or to detain them by force, to attempt which might not perhaps have been either safe or pleasant; or, lastly, to have waved the etiquette of rank, and set out along with them, at the same time managing their dignity, so as to take the initiatory step, though the departure took place upon the motion of their wilful guests. Much tumult there was—bustling, disputing, and shouting—among the troops and officers who were thus moved from their repast, two hours at least sooner than had been experienced upon similar occasions in the memory of the

cious against so fine a form as that of the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius."

"Put it not on that issue, father," said the offended Countess; "for, by my patroness Saint, our Lady of the Broken Lances, had it not been for regard to these two ladies, who seemed to intend some respect to my husband and myself, that same Nicephorus should have been as perfectly a Lord of the Broken Bones as any Cæsar who has borne the title since the great Julius!"

The philosopher, upon this explicit information, began to entertain some personal fear for himself, and hastened, by diverting the conversation, which he did with great dexterity, to the story of Hero and Leander, to put the affront received out of the head of this unscrupulous Amazon.

Meantime, Count Robert of Paris was engrossed, as it may be termed, by the fair Anna Comnena. She spoke on all subjects, on some better, doubtless, others worse, but on none did she suspect herself of any deficiency; while the good Count wished heartily within himself that

his companion had been safely in bed with the enchanted Princess of Zulichium. She performed, right or wrong, the part of a panegyrist of the Normans, until at length the Count, tired of hearing her prate of she knew not exactly what, broke in as follows :—

" Lady," he said, " notwithstanding I and my followers are sometimes so named, yet we are not Normans, who come hither as a numerous and separate body of pilgrims, under the command of their Duke Robert, a valiant, though extravagant, thoughtless, and weak man. I say nothing against the fame of these Normans. They conquered, in our fathers' days, a kingdom far stronger than their own, which men call England; I see that you entertain some of the natives of which country in your pay, under the name of Varangians. Although defeated, as I said, by the Normans, they are, nevertheless, a brave race; nor would we think ourselves much dishonoured by mixing in battle with them. Still we are the valiant Franks, who had their dwelling on the eastern banks of the Rhine and of the Saale, who were converted to the

Christian faith by the celebrated Clovis, and are sufficient, by our numbers and courage, to reconquer the Holy Land, should all Europe besides stand neutral in the contest."

There are few things more painful to the vanity of a person like the Princess, than the being detected in an egregious error, at the moment she is taking credit to herself for being peculiarly accurately informed.

"A false slave, who knew not what he was saying, I suppose," said the Princess, "imposed upon me the belief that the Varangians were the natural enemies of the Normans. I see him marching there by the side of Achilles Tatius, the leader of his corps.—Call him hither, you officers!—Yonder tall man, I mean, with the battle-axe upon his shoulder."

Hereward, distinguished by his post at the head of the squadron, was summoned from thence to the presence of the Princess, where he made his military obeisance with a cast of sternness in his aspect, as his glance lighted upon the proud look of the Frenchman who rode beside Anna Comnena.

"Did I not understand thee, fellow," said Anna Comnena, "to have informed me, nearly a month ago, that the Normans and the Franks were the same people, and enemies to the race from which you spring?"

"The Normans are our mortal enemies, Lady," answered Hereward, "by whom we were driven from our native land. The Franks are subjects of the same Lord-Paramount with the Normans, and therefore they neither love the Varangians, nor are beloved by them."

"Good fellow," said the French Count, "you do the Franks wrong, and ascribe to the Varangians, although not unnaturally, an undue degree of importance, when you suppose that a race which has ceased to exist as an independent nation for more than a generation, can be either an object of interest or resentment to such as we are."

"I am no stranger," said the Varangian, "to the pride of your heart, or the precedence which you assume over those who have been less fortunate in war than yourselves. It is God who casteth down and who buildeth up, nor is there

in the world a prospect to which the Varangians would look forward with more pleasure than that a hundred of their number should meet in a fair field, either with the oppressive Normans, or their modern compatriots, the vain Frenchmen, and let God be the judge which is most worthy of victory."

"You take an insolent advantage of the chance," said the Count of Paris, "which gives you an unlooked-for opportunity to brave a nobleman."

"It is my sorrow and shame," said the Varangian, "that that opportunity is not complete; and that there is a chain around me which forbids me to say, Slay me, or I'll kill thee before we part from this spot!"

"Why, thou foolish and hot-brained churl," replied the Count, "what right hast thou to the honour of dying by my blade? Thou art mad, or hast drained the ale-cup so deeply that thou knowest not what thou thinkest or sayest."

"Thou liest!" said the Varangian; "though such a reproach be the utmost scandal of thy race."

The Frenchman motioned his hand quicker than light to his sword, but instantly withdrew it, and said with dignity, "Thou canst not offend me."

"But thou," said the exile, "hast offended me in a matter which can only be atoned by thy manhood."

"Where and how?" answered the Count: "although it is needless to ask the question, which thou canst not answer rationally."

"Thou hast this day," answered the Varangian, "put a mortal affront upon a great prince, whom thy master calls his ally, and by whom thou hast been received with every rite of hospitality. Him thou hast affronted as one peasant at a merry-making would do shame to another, and this dishonour thou hast done to him in the very face of his own chiefs and princes, and the nobles from every court of Europe."

"It was thy master's part to resent my conduct," said the Frenchman, "if in reality he so much felt it as an affront."

"But that," said Hereward, "did not consist with the manners of his country to do. Besides

that, we trusty Varangians esteem ourselves bound by our oath as much to defend our Emperor, while the service lasts, on every inch of his honour as on every foot of his territory; I therefore tell thee, Sir Knight, Sir Count, or whatever thou callest thyself, there is mortal quarrel between thee and the Varangian guard, ever and until thou hast fought it out in fair and manly battle, body to body, with one of the said Imperial Varangians, when duty and opportunity shall permit:—and so God schaw the right!"

As this passed in the French language, the meaning escaped the understanding of such Imperialists as were within hearing at the time; and the Princess, who waited with some astonishment till the Crusader and the Varangian had finished their conference, when it was over, said to him with interest, "I trust you feel that poor man's situation to be too much at a distance from your own, to admit of your meeting him in what is termed knightly battle?"

"On such a question," said the knight, "I have but one answer to any lady who does not, like my Brenhilda, cover herself with a shield,

and bear a sword by her side, and the heart of a knight in her bosom."

"And suppose for once," said the Princess Anna Comnena, "that I possessed such titles to your confidence, what would your answer be to me?"

"There can be little reason for concealing it," said the Count. "The Varangian is a brave man, and a strong one; it is contrary to my vow to shun his challenge, and perhaps I shall derogate from my rank by accepting it; but the world is wide, and he is yet to be born who has seen Robert of Paris shun the face of mortal man. By means of some gallant officer among the Emperor's guards, this poor fellow, who nourishes so strange an ambition, shall learn that he shall have his wish gratified."

"And then?"—— said Anna Comnena.

"Why, then," said the Count, "in the poor man's own language, God schaw the right!"

"Which is to say," said the Princess, "that if my father has an officer of his guards honourable enough to forward so pious and reasonable a purpose, the Emperor must lose an ally, in

whose faith he puts confidence, or a most trusty and faithful soldier of his personal guard, who has distinguished himself upon many occasions?"

"I am happy to hear," said the Count, "that the man bears such a character. In truth, his ambition ought to have some foundation. The more I think of it, the rather am I of opinion that there is something generous, rather than derogatory, in giving to the poor exile, whose thoughts are so high and noble, those privileges of a man of rank, which some who were born in such lofty station are too cowardly to avail themselves of. Yet despond not, noble Princess; the challenge is not yet accepted of, and if it was, the issue is in the hand of God. As for me, whose trade is war, the sense that I have something so serious to transact with this resolute man, will keep me from other less honourable quarrels, in which a lack of occupation might be apt to involve me."

The Princess made no farther observation, being resolved, by private remonstrance to Achilles Tatius, to engage him to prevent a meeting which might be fatal to the one or the other of two

brave men. The town now darkened before them, sparkling, at the same time, through its obscurity, by the many lights which illuminated the houses of the citizens. The royal cavalcade held their way to the Golden Gate, where the trusty centurion put his guard under arms to receive them.

"We must now break off, fair ladies," said the Count, as the party, having now dismounted, were standing together at the private gate of the Blacquernal Palace, "and find, as we can, the lodgings which we occupied last night."

"Under your favour, no," said the Empress. "You must be content to take your supper and repose in quarters more fitting your rank; and," added Irene, "with no worse quartermaster than one of the Imperial family who has been your travelling companion."

This the Count heard, with considerable inclination to accept the hospitality which was so readily offered. Although as devoted as a man could well be to the charms of his Brenhilda, the very idea never having entered his head of preferring another's beauty to hers, yet, neverthe-

less, he had naturally felt himself flattered by the attentions of a woman of eminent beauty and very high rank; and the praises with which the Princess had loaded him, had not entirely fallen to the ground. He was no longer in the humour in which the morning had found him, disposed to outrage the feelings of the Emperor, and to insult his dignity; but, flattered by the adroit sycophancy which the old philosopher had learned from the schools, and the beautiful Princess had been gifted with by nature, he assented to the Empress's proposal; the more readily, perhaps, that the darkness did not permit him to see that there was distinctly a shade of displeasure on the brow of Brenhilda. Whatever the cause, she cared not to express it, and the married pair had just entered that labyrinth of passages through which Hereward had formerly wandered, when a chamberlain, and a female attendant, richly dressed, bent the knee before them, and offered them the means and place to adjust their attire, ere they entered the Imperial presence. Brenhilda looked upon her apparel and arms, spotted with the blood of the

insolent Scythian, and, Amazon as she was, felt the shame of being carelessly and improperly dressed. The arms of the knight were also bloody, and in disarrangement.

"Tell my female squire, Agatha, to give her attendance," said the Countess. "She alone is in the habit of assisting to unarm and to attire me."

"Now, God be praised," thought the Grecian lady of the bedchamber, "that I am not called to a toilette where smiths' hammers and tongs are like to be the instruments most in request!"

"Tell Marcian, my armourer," said the Count, "to attend with the silver and blue suit of plate and mail which I won in a wager from the Count of Tholouse."

"Might I not have the honour of adjusting your armour," said a splendidly drest courtier, with some marks of the armourer's profession, "since I have put on that of the Emperor himself?—may his name be sacred!"

"And how many rivets hast thou clenched upon the occasion with this hand," said the Count, catching hold of it, "which looks as if it

had never been washed, save with milk of roses,—and with this childish toy?" pointing to a hammer, with ivory haft and silver head, which, stuck into a milk-white kidskin apron, the official wore as badges of his duty. The armourer fell back in some confusion. "His grasp," he said to another domestic, "is like the hold of a vice!"

While this little scene past apart, the Empress Irene, her daughter, and her son-in-law, left the company, under pretence of making a necessary change in their apparel. Immediately after, Agelastes was required to attend the Emperor, and the strangers were conducted to two adjacent chambers of retirement, splendidly fitted up, and placed for the present at their disposal, and that of their attendants. There we shall for a time leave them, assuming, with the assistance of their own attendants, a dress which their ideas regarded as most fit for a great occasion; those of the Grecian court willingly keeping apart from a task which they held nearly as formidable as assisting at the lair of a royal tiger or his bride.

Agelastes found the Emperor sedulously arran-

ging his most splendid court-dress; for, as in the court of Pekin, the change of ceremonial attire was a great part of the ritual observed at Constantinople.

"Thou hast done well, wise Agelastes," said Alexius to the philosopher, as he approached with abundance of prostrations and genuflexions— "Thou hast done well, and we are content with thee. Less than thy wit and address must have failed in separating from their company this tameless bull, and unyoked heifer, over whom, if we obtain influence, we shall command, by every account, no small interest among those who esteem them the bravest in the host."

"My humble understanding," said Agelastes, "had been infinitely inferior to the management of so prudent and sagacious a scheme, had it not been shaped forth and suggested by the inimitable wisdom of your most sacred Imperial Highness."

"We are aware," said Alexius, "that we had the merit of blocking forth the scheme of detaining these persons, either by their choice as allies, or by main force as hostages. Their friends, ere

yet they have missed them, will be engaged in war with the Turks, and at no liberty, if the devil should suggest such an undertaking, to take arms against the sacred empire. Thus, Agelastes, we shall obtain hostages at least as important and as valuable as that Count of Vermandois, whose liberty the tremendous Godfrey of Bouillon extorted from us by threats of instant war."

"Pardon," said Agelastes, "if I add another reason to those which of themselves so happily support your august resolution. It is possible that we may, by observing the greatest caution and courtesy towards these strangers, win them in good earnest to our side."

"I conceive you, I conceive you—" said the Emperor; "and this very night I will exhibit myself to this Count and his lady in the royal presence chamber, in the richest robes which our wardrobe can furnish. The lions of Solomon shall roar, the golden tree of Comnenus shall display its wonders, and the feeble eyes of these Franks shall be altogether dazzled by the splendour of the empire. These spectacles cannot but sink into their minds, and dispose them to

become the allies and servants of a nation so much more powerful, skilful, and wealthy than their own.—Thou hast something to say, Agelastes. Years and long study have made thee wise; though we have given our opinion, thou mayest speak thine own, and live."

Thrice three times did Agelastes press his brow against the hem of the Emperor's garment, and great seemed his anxiety to find such words as might intimate his dissent from his sovereign, yet save him from the informality of contradicting him expressly.

"These sacred words, in which your sacred Highness has uttered your most just and accurate opinions, are undeniable, and incapable of contradiction, were any vain enough to attempt to impugn them. Nevertheless, be it lawful to say, that men show the wisest arguments in vain to those who do not understand reason, just as you would in vain exhibit a curious piece of limning to the blind, or endeavour to bribe, as Scripture saith, a sow by the offer of a precious stone. The fault is not, in such case, in the accuracy of your sacred reasoning, but in the obtuseness and per-

verseness of the barbarians to whom it is applied."

"Speak more plainly," said the Emperor; "how often must we tell thee, that in cases in which we really want counsel, we know we must be contented to sacrifice ceremony?"

"Then, in plain words," said Agelastes, "these European barbarians are like no others under the cope of the universe, either in the things on which they look with desire, or on those which they consider as discouraging. The treasures of this noble empire, so far as they affected their wishes, would merely inspire them with the desire to go to war with a nation possessed of so much wealth, and who, in their self-conceited estimation, were less able to defend, than they themselves are powerful to assail. Of such a description, for instance, is Bohemond of Antioch,—and such a one is many a crusader less able and sagacious than he;—for, I think, I need not tell your Imperial Divinity, that he holds his own self-interest to be the devoted guide of his whole conduct through this extraordinary war; and that, therefore, you can justly calculate his course,

when once you are aware from which point of the compass the wind of avarice and self-interest breathes with respect to him. But there are spirits among the Franks of a very different nature, and who must be acted upon by very different motives, if we would make ourselves masters of their actions, and the principles by which they are governed. If it were lawful to do so, I would request your Majesty to look at the manner by which an artful juggler of your court achieves his imposition upon the eyes of spectators, yet heedfully disguises the means by which he attains his object. This people—I mean the more lofty-minded of these crusaders, who act up to the pretences of the doctrine which they call chivalry—despise the thirst of gold, and gold itself, unless to hilt their swords, or to furnish forth some necessary expenses, as alike useless and contemptible. The man who can be moved by the thirst of gain, they contemn, scorn, and despise, and liken him, in the meanness of his objects, to the most paltry serf that ever followed the plough, or wielded the spade. On the other hand, if it happens that they

actually need gold, they are sufficiently unceremonious in taking it where they can most easily find it. Thus, they are neither easily to be bribed by giving them sums of gold, nor to be starved into compliance by withholding what chance may render necessary for them. In the one case, they set no value upon the gift of a little paltry yellow dross; on the other, they are accustomed to take what they want."

"Yellow dross!" interrupted Alexius. "Do they call that noble metal, equally respected by Roman and barbarian, by rich and poor, by great and mean, by churchmen and laymen, which all mankind are fighting for, plotting for, planning for, intriguing for, and damning themselves for, both soul and body—by the opprobrious name of yellow dross! They are mad, Agelastes, utterly mad. Perils and dangers, penalties and scourges, are the only arguments to which men who are above the universal influence which moves all others, can possibly be accessible."

"Nor are they," said Agelastes, "more accessible to fear than they are to self-interest. They are indeed, from their boyhood, brought up to

scorn those passions which influence ordinary minds, whether by means of avarice to impel, or of fear to hold back. So much is this the case, that what is enticing to other men, must, to interest them, have the piquant sauce of extreme danger. I told, for instance, to this very hero, a legend of a Princess of Zulichium, who lay on an enchanted couch, beautiful as an angel, awaiting the chosen knight who should, by dispelling her enchanted slumbers, become master of her person, of her kingdom of Zulichium, and of her countless treasures; and, would your Imperial Majesty believe me, I could scarce get the gallant to attend to my legend, or take any interest in the adventure, till I assured him he would have to encounter a winged dragon, compared to which the largest of those in the Frank romances was but like a mere dragon-fly!"

"And did this move the gallant?" said the Emperor.

"So much so," replied the philosopher, "that had I not unfortunately, by the earnestness of my description, awakened the jealousy of his Penthesilea of a Countess, he had forgotten the cru-

sade and all belonging to it, to go in quest of Zulichium and its slumbering sovereign."

"Nay, then," said the Emperor, "we have in our empire (make us sensible of the advantage!) innumerable tale-tellers who are not possessed in the slightest degree of that noble scorn of gold which is proper to the Franks, but shall, for a brace of besants, lie with the devil, and beat him to boot, if in that manner we can gain, as mariners say, the weathergage of the Franks."

"Discretion," said Agelastes, "is in the highest degree necessary. Simply to lie is no very great matter; it is merely a departure from the truth, which is little different from missing a mark at archery, where the whole horizon, one point alone excepted, will alike serve the shooter's purpose; but to move the Frank as is desired, requires a perfect knowledge of his temper and disposition, great caution and presence of mind, and the most versatile readiness in changing from one subject to another. Had I not myself been somewhat alert, I might have paid the penalty of a false step in your Majesty's ser-

vice, by being flung into my own cascade by the virago whom I offended."

"A perfect Thalestris!" said the Emperor; "I shall take care what offence I give her."

"If I might speak and live," said Agelastes, "the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius had best adopt the same precaution."

"Nicephorus," said the Emperor, "must settle that with our daughter. I have ever told her that she gives him too much of that history, of which a page or two is sufficiently refreshing; but by our own self we must swear it, Agelastes, that, night after night, hearing nothing else, would subdue the patience of a saint!—Forget, good Agelastes, that thou hast heard me say such a thing—more especially, remember it not when thou art in presence of our Imperial wife and daughter."

"Nor were the freedoms taken by the Cæsar beyond the bounds of an innocent gallantry," said Agelastes; "but the Countess, I must needs say, is dangerous. She killed this day the Scythian Toxartis, by what seemed a mere fillip on the head."

"Hah!" said the Emperor; "I knew that Toxartis, and he was like enough to deserve his death, being a bold unscrupulous marauder. Take notes, however, how it happened, the names of witnesses, &c. that, if necessary, we may exhibit the fact as a deed of aggression on the part of the Count and Countess of Paris, to the assembly of the crusaders."

"I trust," said Agelastes, "your Imperial Majesty will not easily resign the golden opportunity of gaining to your standard persons whose character stands so very high in chivalry. It would cost you but little to bestow upon them a Grecian island, worth a hundred of their own paltry lordship of Paris; and if it were given under the condition of their expelling the infidels or the disaffected who may have obtained the temporary possession, it would be so much the more likely to be an acceptable offer. I need not say that the whole knowledge, wisdom, and skill of the poor Agelastes is at your Imperial Majesty's disposal."

The Emperor paused for a moment, and then said, as if on full consideration, "Worthy Age-

lastes, I dare trust thee in this difficult and somewhat dangerous matter; but I will keep my purpose of exhibiting to them the lions of Solomon, and the golden tree of our Imperial house."

"To that there can be no objection," returned the philosopher; "only remember to exhibit few guards, for these Franks are like a fiery horse; when in temper he may be ridden with a silk thread, but, when he has taken umbrage or suspicion, as they would likely do if they saw many armed men, a steel bridle would not restrain him."

"I will be cautious," said the Emperor, "in that particular, as well as others.—Sound the silver bell, Agelastes, that the officers of our wardrobe may attend."

"One single word, while your Highness is alone," said Agelastes. "Will your Imperial Majesty transfer to me the direction of your menagerie, or collection of extraordinary creatures?"

"You make me wonder," said the Emperor, taking a signet, bearing upon it a lion, with the legend, *Vicit Leo ex tribu Judæ*. "This," he said,

"will give thee the command of our dens. And now, be candid for once with thy master—for deception is thy nature even with me—By what charm wilt thou subdue these untamed savages?"

"By the power of falsehood," replied Agelastes, with deep reverence.

"I believe thee an adept in it," said the Emperor. "And to which of their foibles wilt thou address it?"

"To their love of fame," said the philosopher; and retreated backwards out of the royal apartments, as the officers of the wardrobe entered to complete the investment of the Emperor in his Imperial habiliments.

CHAPTER III.

I will converse with iron-witted fools,
And unrespective boys; none are for me,
That look into me with considerate eyes;—
High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect.
Richard III.

As they parted from each other, the Emperor and philosopher had each their own anxious thoughts on the interview which had past between them; thoughts which they expressed in broken sentences and ejaculations, though for the better understanding of the degree of estimation in which they held each other, we will give them a more regular and intelligible form.

"Thus, then," half muttered half said Alexius, but so low as to hide his meaning from the officers of the wardrobe, who entered to do their office,—"thus then this bookworm—this remnant

of old heathen philosophy, who hardly believes, so God save me, the truth of the Christian creed, has topp'd his part so well that he forces his Emperor to dissemble in his presence. Beginning by being the buffoon of the court, he has wormed himself into all its secrets, made himself master of all its intrigues, conspired with my own son-in-law against me, debauched my guards, —indeed so woven his web of deceit, that my life is safe no longer, than he believes me the Imperial dolt which I have affected to seem, in order to deceive him; fortunate that even so I can escape his cautionary anticipation of my displeasure, by avoiding to precipitate his measures of violence. But were this sudden storm of the crusade fairly passed over, the ungrateful Cæsar, the boastful coward Achilles Tatius, and the bosom serpent Agelastes, shall know whether Alexius Comnenus has been born their dupe. When Greek meets Greek, comes the strife of subtlety, as well as the tug of war." Thus saying, he resigned himself to the officers of his wardrobe, who proceeded to ornament him as the solemnity required.

"I trust him not," said Agelastes, the meaning of whose gestures and exclamations, we, in like manner, render into a connected meaning. "I cannot, and do not trust him—he somewhat overacts his part. He has borne himself upon other occasions with the shrewd wit of his family the Comneni; yet he now trusts to the effect of his trumpery lions upon such a shrewd people as the Franks and Normans, and seems to rely upon me for the character of men with whom he has been engaged in peace and war for many years. This can be but to gain my confidence; for there were imperfect looks, and broken sentences, which seemed to say, 'Agelastes, the Emperor knows thee, and confides not in thee.' Yet the plot is successful and undiscovered, as far as can be judged; and were I to attempt to recede now, I were lost for ever. A little time to carry on this intrigue with the Frank, when possibly, by the assistance of this gallant, Alexius shall exchange the crown for a cloister, or a still narrower abode; and then, Agelastes, thou deservest to be blotted from the roll of philosophers, if thou

canst not push out of the throne the conceited and luxurious Cæsar, and reign in his stead, a second Marcus Antoninus, when the wisdom of thy rule, long unfelt in a world which has been guided by tyrants and voluptuaries, shall soon obliterate recollection of the manner in which thy power was acquired. To work then—be active, and be cautious. The time requires it, and the prize deserves it."

While these thoughts past through his mind, he arrayed himself, by the assistance of Diogenes, in a clean suit of that simple apparel in which he always frequented the court; a garb as unlike that of a candidate for royalty, as it was a contrast to the magnificent robes with which Alexius was now investing himself.

In their separate apartments, or dressing-rooms, the Count of Paris and his lady put on the best apparel which they had prepared to meet such a chance upon their journey. Even in France, Robert was seldom seen in the peaceful cap and sweeping mantle, whose high plumes and flowing folds were the garb of knights in times of peace. He was now arrayed in a splen-

did suit of armour, all except the head, which was bare otherwise than as covered by his curled locks. The rest of his person was sheathed in the complete mail of the time, richly inlaid with silver, which contrasted with the azure in which the steel was damasked. His spurs were upon his heels—his sword was by his side, and his triangular shield was suspended round his neck, bearing, painted upon it, a number of *fleurs-de-lis semées*, as it is called, upon the field, being the origin of those lily flowers which after times reduced to three only; and which were the terror of Europe, until they suffered so many reverses in our own time.

The extreme height of Count Robert's person adapted him for a garb, which had a tendency to make persons of a lower stature appear rather dwarfish and thick when arrayed *cap-à-pié*. The features, with their self-collected composure, and noble contempt of whatever could have astounded or shaken an ordinary mind, formed a well-fitted capital to the excellently proportioned and vigorous frame which they terminated. The Countess was in more peaceful attire; but her robes were

short and succinct, like those of one who might be called to hasty exercise. The upper part of her dress consisted of more than one tunic, sitting close to the body, while a skirt, descending from the girdle, and reaching to the ankles, embroidered elegantly but richly, completed an attire which a lady might have worn in much more modern times. Her tresses were covered with a light steel head-piece, though some of them, escaping, played round her face, and gave relief to those handsome features which might otherwise have seemed too formal, if closed entirely within the verge of steel. Over these under-garments was flung a rich velvet cloak of a deep green colour, descending from the head, where a species of hood was loosely adjusted over the helmet, deeply laced upon its verges and seams, and so long as to sweep the ground behind. A dagger of rich materials ornamented a girdle of curious goldsmith's work, and was the only offensive weapon which, notwithstanding her military occupation, she bore upon this occasion.

The toilette—as modern times would say—of the Countess, was not nearly so soon ended as

that of Count Robert, who occupied his time, as husbands of every period are apt to do, in little subacid complaints between jest and earnest, upon the dilatory nature of ladies, and the time which they lose in doffing and donning their garments. But when the Countess Brenhilda came forth, in the pride of loveliness, from the inner chamber where she had attired herself, her husband, who was still her lover, clasped her to his breast, and expressed his privilege by the kiss which he took as of right from a creature so beautiful. Chiding him for his folly, yet almost returning the kiss which she received, Brenhilda began now to wonder how they were to find their way to the presence of the Emperor.

The query was soon solved, for a gentle knock at the door announced Agelastes, to whom, as best acquainted with the Frankish manners, had been committed, by the Emperor, the charge of introducing the noble strangers. A distant sound, like that of the roaring of a lion, or not unsimilar to a large and deep gong of modern times, intimated the commencement of the ceremonial. The black slaves upon guard, who, as hath been

observed, were in small numbers, stood ranged in their state dresses of white and gold, bearing in one hand a naked sabre, and in the other a torch of white wax, which served to guide the Count and Countess through the passages that led to the interior of the palace, and to the most secret hall of audience.

The door of this *sanctum sanctorum* was lower than usual, a simple stratagem devised by some superstitious officer of the Imperial household, to compel the lofty-crested Frank to lower his body, as he presented himself in the Imperial presence. Robert, when the door flew open, and he discovered in the back-ground the Emperor seated on his throne amidst a glare of light, which was broken and reflected in ten thousand folds by the jewels with which his vestments were covered, stopt short, and demanded the meaning of introducing him through so low an arch? Agelastes pointed to the Emperor, by way of shifting from himself a question which he could not have answered. The mute, to apologize for his silence, yawned, and showed the loss of his tongue.

"Holy Virgin!" said the Countess, "what can these unhappy Africans have done, to have deserved a condemnation which involves so cruel a fate?"

"The hour of retribution is perhaps come," said the Count, in a displeased tone, while Agelastes, with such hurry as time and place permitted, entered, making his prostrations and genuflexions, little doubting that the Frank must follow him, and to do so, must lower his body to the Emperor. The Count, however, in the height of displeasure at the trick which he conceived had been intended him, turned himself round, and entered the presence-chamber with his back purposely turned to the sovereign, and did not face Alexius until he reached the middle of the apartment, when he was joined by the Countess, who had made her approach in a more seemly manner. The Emperor, who had prepared to acknowledge the Count's expected homage in the most gracious manner, found himself now even more unpleasantly circumstanced than when this uncompromising Frank had usurped the royal throne in the course of the day.

The officers and nobles who stood around, though a very select number, were more numerous than usual, as the meeting was not held for counsel, but merely for state. These assumed such an appearance of mingled displeasure and confusion as might best suit with the perplexity of Alexius, while the wily features of the Norman-Italian, Bohemond of Antioch, who was also present, had a singular mixture of fantastical glee and derision. It is the misfortune of the weaker on such occasions, or at least the more timid, to be obliged to take the petty part of winking hard, as if not able to see what they cannot avenge.

Alexius made the signal that the ceremonial of the grand reception should immediately commence. Instantly the lions of Solomon, which had been newly furbished, raised their heads, erected their manes, brandished their tails, until they excited the imagination of Count Robert, who, being already on fire at the circumstances of his reception, conceived the bellowing of these automata to be the actual annunciation of immediate assault. Whether the lions, whose forms he

beheld, were actually lords of the forest,—whether they were mortals who had suffered transformation,—whether they were productions of the skill of an artful juggler, or profound naturalist, the Count neither knew nor cared. All that he thought of the danger was, that it was worthy of his courage; nor did his heart permit him a moment's irresolution. He strode to the nearest lion, which seemed in the act of springing up, and said, in a tone loud and formidable as its own, "How now, dog!" At the same time he struck the figure with his clenched fist and steel gauntlet with so much force, that its head burst, and the steps and carpet of the throne were covered with wheels, springs, and other machinery, which had been the means of producing its mimic terrors.

On this display of the real nature of the cause of his anger, Count Robert could not but feel a little ashamed of having given way to passion on such an occasion. He was still more confused when Bohemond, descending from his station near the Emperor, addressed him in the Frank language;—"You have done a gallant

deed, truly, Count Robert, in freeing the court of Byzantium from an object of fear which has long been used to frighten peevish children and unruly barbarians!"

Enthusiasm has no greater enemy than ridicule. "Why, then," said Count Robert, blushing deeply at the same time, "did they exhibit its fantastic terrors to me? I am neither child nor barbarian."

"Address yourself to the Emperor, then, as an intelligent man," answered Bohemond. "Say something to him in excuse of your conduct, and show that our bravery has not entirely run away with our common sense. And hark you also, while I have a moment's speech of you,—do you and your wife heedfully follow my example at supper!" These words were spoken with a significant tone and corresponding look.

The opinion of Bohemond, from his long intercourse, both in peace and war, with the Grecian Emperor, gave him great influence with the other Crusaders, and Count Robert yielded to his advice. He turned towards the Emperor with something liker an obeisance than he had

hitherto paid. "I crave your pardon," he said, "for breaking that gilded piece of pageantry; but, in sooth, the wonders of sorcery, and the portents of accomplished and skilful jugglers, are so numerous in this country, that one does not clearly distinguish what is true from what is false, or what is real from what is illusory."

The Emperor, notwithstanding the presence of mind for which he was remarkable, and the courage in which he was not held by his countrymen to be deficient, received this apology somewhat awkwardly. Perhaps the rueful complaisance with which he accepted the Count's apology, might be best compared to that of a lady of the present day when an awkward guest has broken a valuable piece of china. He muttered something about the machines having been long preserved in the Imperial family, as being made on the model of those which guarded the throne of the wise King of Israel; to which the blunt plain-spoken Count expressed his doubt in reply, whether the wisest prince in the world ever condescended to frighten his subjects or guests by the mimic roarings of a wooden lion.

"If," said he, "I too hastily took it for a living creature, I have had the worst, by damaging my excellent gauntlet in dashing to pieces its timber skull."

The Emperor, after a little more had been said, chiefly on the same subject, proposed that they should pass to the banquet-room. Marshalled, accordingly, by the grand sewer of the Imperial table, and attended by all present, excepting the Emperor and the immediate members of his family, the Frankish guests were guided through a labyrinth of apartments, each of which was filled with wonders of nature and art, calculated to enhance their opinion of the wealth and grandeur which had assembled together so much that was wonderful. Their passage being necessarily slow and interrupted, gave the Emperor time to change his dress, according to the ritual of his court, which did not permit his appearing twice in the same vesture before the same spectators. He took the opportunity to summon Agelastes into his presence, and, that their conference might be secret, he used, in assisting his toilette, the agency of some

of the mutes destined for the service of the interior.

The temper of Alexius Comnenus was considerably moved, although it was one of the peculiarities of his situation to be ever under the necessity of disguising the emotions of his mind, and of affecting, in presence of his subjects, a superiority to human passion, which he was far from feeling. It was therefore with gravity, and even reprehension, that he asked, "By whose error it was that the wily Bohemond, half-Italian, and half-Asiatic, was present at this interview? Surely, if there be one in the crusading army likely to conduct that foolish youth and his wife behind the scenes of the exhibition by which we hoped to impose upon them, the Prince of Antioch, as he entitles himself, is that person."

"It was that old man," said Agelastes, "(if I may reply and live,) Michael Cantacuzene, who deemed that his presence was peculiarly desired; but he returns to the camp this very night."

"Yes," said Alexius, "to inform Godfrey, and the rest of the crusaders, that one of the

boldest and most highly esteemed of their number is left, with his wife, a hostage in our Imperial city, and to bring back, perhaps, an alternative of instant war, unless they are delivered up!"

"If it is your Imperial Highness's will to think so," said Agelastes, "you can suffer Count Robert and his wife to return to the camp with the Italian-Norman."

"What?" answered the Emperor, "and so lose all the fruits of an enterprise, the preparations for which have already cost us so much in actual expense; and, were our heart made of the same stuff with that of ordinary mortals, would have cost us so much more in vexation and anxiety? No, no; issue warning to the crusaders, who are still on the hither side, that farther rendering of homage is dispensed with, and that they repair to the quays on the banks of the Bosphorus, by peep of light to-morrow. Let our admiral, as he values his head, pass every man of them over to the farther side before noon. Let there be largesses, a princely banquet on the farther bank —all that may increase their anxiety to pass. Then, Agelastes, we will trust to ourselves to

meet this additional danger, either by bribing the venality of Bohemond, or by bidding defiance to the crusaders. Their forces are scattered, and the chief of them, with the leaders themselves, are all now—or by far the greater part—on the east side of the Bosphorus.—And now to the banquet! seeing that the change of dress has been made sufficient to answer the statutes of the household; since our ancestors chose to make rules for exhibiting us to our subjects, as priests exhibit their images at their shrines!"

"Under grant of life," said Agelastes, "it was not done inconsiderately, but in order that the Emperor, ruled ever by the same laws from father to son, might ever be regarded as something beyond the common laws of humanity—the divine image of a saint, therefore, rather than a human being."

"We know it, good Agelastes," answered the Emperor, with a smile, "and we are also aware, that many of our subjects, like the worshippers of Bel in holy writ, treat us so far as an image, as to assist us in devouring the revenues of our provinces, which are gathered in our

name, and for our use. These things we now only touch lightly, the time not suiting them."

Alexius left the secret council accordingly, after the order for the passage of the crusaders had been written out and subscribed in due form, and in the sacred ink of the Imperial chancery.

Meantime, the rest of the company had arrived in a hall, which, like the other apartments in the palace, was most tastefully as well as gorgeously fitted up, except that a table, which presented a princely banquet, might have been deemed faulty in this respect, that the dishes which were most splendid, both in the materials of which they were composed, and in the viands which they held, were elevated by means of feet, so as to be upon a level with female guests as they sat, and with men as they lay recumbent at the banquet which it offered.

Around stood a number of black slaves richly attired, while the grand sewer, Michael Cantacuzene, arranged the strangers with his golden wand, and conveyed orders to them, by signs, that all should remain standing around the table, until a signal should be given.

The upper end of the board, thus furnished, and thus surrounded, was hidden by a curtain of muslin and silver, which fell from the top of the arch under which the upper part seemed to pass. On this curtain the sewer kept a wary eye; and when he observed it slightly shake, he waved his wand of office, and all expected the result.

As if self-moved, the mystic curtain arose, and discovered behind it a throne eight steps higher than the end of the table, decorated in the most magnificent manner, and having placed before it a small table of ivory inlaid with silver, behind which was seated Alexius Comnenus, in a dress entirely different from what he had worn in the course of the day, and so much more gorgeous than his former vestments, that it seemed not unnatural that his subjects should prostrate themselves before a figure so splendid. His wife, his daughter, and his son-in-law the Cæsar, stood behind him with faces bent to the ground, and it was with deep humility, that, descending from the throne at the Emperor's command, they mingled with the guests of the lower table, and, exalted as they were, proceeded to the festive

board at the signal of the grand sewer. So that they could not be said to partake of the repast with the Emperor, nor to be placed at the Imperial table, although they supped in his presence, and were encouraged by his repeated request to them to make good cheer. No dishes presented at the lower table were offered at the higher: but wines, and more delicate sorts of food, which arose before the Emperor as if by magic, and seemed designed for his own proper use, were repeatedly sent, by his special directions, to one or other of the guests whom Alexius delighted to honour—among these the Franks being particularly distinguished.

The behaviour of Bohemond was on this occasion particularly remarkable.

Count Robert, who kept an eye upon him, both from his recent words, and owing to an expressive look which he once or twice darted towards him, observed, that in no liquors or food, not even those sent from the Emperor's own table, did this astucious prince choose to indulge. A piece of bread, taken from the canister at random, and a glass of pure water, was

the only refreshment of which he was pleased to partake. His alleged excuse was, the veneration due to the Holy Festival of the Advent, which chanced to occur that very night, and which both the Greek and Latin rule agreed to hold sacred.

"I had not expected this of you, Sir Bohemond," said the Emperor, "that you should have refused my personal hospitality at my own board, on the very day on which you honoured me by entering into my service as vassal for the principality of Antioch."

"Antioch is not yet conquered," said Sir Bohemond; "and conscience, dread sovereign, must always have its exceptions, in whatever temporal contracts we may engage."

"Come, gentle Count," said the Emperor, who obviously regarded Bohemond's inhospitable humour as something arising more from suspicion than devotion, "we invite, though it is not our custom, our children, our noble guests, and our principal officers here present, to a general carouse. Fill the cups, called the Nine

Muses! let them be brimful of the wine which is said to be sacred to the Imperial lips!"

At the Emperor's command the cups were filled; they were of pure gold, and there was richly engraved upon each the effigy of the Muse to whom it was dedicated.

"You, at least," said the Emperor, "my gentle Count Robert, you and your lovely lady, will not have any scruple to pledge your Imperial host?"

"If that scruple is to imply suspicion of the provisions with which we are here served, I disdain to nourish such," said Count Robert. "If it is a sin which I commit by tasting wine to-night, it is a venial one; nor shall I greatly augment my load by carrying it, with the rest of my trespasses, to the next confessional."

"Will you then, Prince Bohemond, not be ruled by the conduct of your friend?" said the Emperor.

"Methinks," replied the Norman-Italian, "my friend might have done better to have been ruled by mine; but be it as his wisdom

pleases. The flavour of such exquisite wine is sufficient for me."

So saying, he emptied the wine into another goblet, and seemed alternately to admire the carving of the cup, and the flavour of what it had lately contained.

"You are right, Sir Bohemond," said the Emperor; "the fabric of that cup is beautiful; it was done by one of the ancient gravers of Greece. The boasted cup of Nestor, which Homer has handed down to us, was a good deal larger perhaps, but neither equalled these in the value of the material, nor the exquisite beauty of the workmanship. Let each one, therefore, of my stranger guests, accept of the cup which he either has or might have drunk out of, as a recollection of me; and may the expedition against the infidels be as propitious as their confidence and courage deserve!"

"If I accept your gift, mighty Emperor," said Bohemond, "it is only to atone for the apparent discourtesy, when my devotion compels me to decline your Imperial pledge, and to show you

that we part on the most intimate terms of friendship."

So saying, he bowed deeply to the Emperor, who answered him with a smile, into which was thrown a considerable portion of sarcastic expression.

"And I," said the Count of Paris, "having taken upon my conscience the fault of meeting your Imperial pledge, may stand excused from incurring the blame of aiding to dismantle your table of these curious drinking cups. We empty them to your health, and we cannot in any other respect profit by them."

"But Prince Bohemond can," said the Emperor; "to whose quarters they shall be carried, sanctioned by your generous use. And we have still a set for you, and for your lovely Countess, equal to that of the Graces, though no longer matching in number the nymphs of Parnassus.—The evening bell rings, and calls us to remember the hour of rest, that we may be ready to meet the labours of to-morrow."

The party then broke up for the evening. Bohemond left the palace that night, not forget-

ting the Muses, of whom he was not in general a devotee. The result was, as the wily Greek had intended, that he had established between Bohemond and the Count, not indeed a quarrel, but a kind of difference of opinion; Bohemond feeling that the fiery Count of Paris must think his conduct sordid and avaricious, while Count Robert was far less inclined than before to rely on him as a counsellor.

CHAPTER IV.

THE Count of Paris and his lady were that night lodged in the Imperial Palace of Blacquernal. Their apartments were contiguous, but the communication between them was cut off for the night by the mutual door being locked and barred. They marvelled somewhat at this precaution. The observance, however, of the festival of the church, was pleaded as an admissible, and not unnatural excuse for this extraordinary circumstance. Neither the Count nor his lady entertained, it may be believed, the slightest personal fear for any thing which could happen to them. Their attendants, Marcian and Agatha, having assisted their master and mistress in the performance of their usual offices, left them, in order to seek the places of repose assigned to them among persons of their degree.

The preceding day had been one of excitation, and of much bustle and interest; perhaps, also, the wine, sacred to the Imperial lips, of which Count Robert had taken a single, indeed, but a deep draught, was more potent than the delicate and high-flavoured juice of the Gascogne grape, to which he was accustomed; at any rate, it seemed to him that, from the time he felt that he had slept, daylight ought to have been broad in his chamber when he awaked, and yet it was still darkness almost palpable. Somewhat surprised, he gazed eagerly around, but could discern nothing, except two balls of red light which shone from among the darkness with a self-emitted brilliancy, like the eyes of a wild animal while it glares upon its prey. The Count started from bed to put on his armour, a necessary precaution if what he saw should really be a wild creature and at liberty; but the instant he stirred, a deep growl was uttered, such as the Count had never heard, but which might be compared to the sound of a thousand monsters at once; and, as the symphony, was heard the clash of iron chains, and the springing of a

monstrous creature towards the bedside, which appeared, however, to be withheld by some fastening from attaining the end of its bound. The roars which it uttered now ran thick on each other. They were most tremendous, and must have been heard throughout the whole palace. The creature seemed to gather itself many yards nearer to the bed than by its glaring eye-balls it appeared at first to be stationed, and how much nearer, or what degree of motion, might place him within the monster's reach, the Count was totally uncertain. Its breathing was even heard, and Count Robert thought he felt the heat of its respiration, while his defenceless limbs might not be two yards distant from the fangs which he heard grinding against each other, and the claws which tore up fragments of wood from the oaken floor. The Count of Paris was one of the bravest men who lived in a time when bravery was the universal property of all who claimed a drop of noble blood, and the knight was a descendant of Charlemagne. He was, however, a man, and therefore cannot be said to have endured unappalled a sense of danger so

unexpected and so extraordinary. But his was not a sudden alarm or panic, it was a calm sense of extreme peril, qualified by a resolution to exert his faculties to the uttermost, to save his life if it were possible. He withdrew himself within the bed, no longer a place of rest, being thus a few feet further from the two glaring eyeballs which remained so closely fixed upon him, that, in spite of his courage, nature painfully suggested the bitter imagination of his limbs being mangled, torn, and churned with their life-blood, in the jaws of some monstrous beast of prey. One saving thought alone presented itself—this might be a trial, an experiment of the philosopher Agelastes, or of the Emperor his master, for the purpose of proving the courage of which the Christians vaunted so highly, and punishing the thoughtless insult which the Count had been unadvised enough to put upon the Emperor the preceding day.

"Well is it said," he reflected in his agony, "beard not the lion in his den! Perhaps even now some base slave deliberates whether I have yet tasted enough of the preliminary agonies of

death, and whether he shall yet slip the chain which keeps the savage from doing his work. But come death when it will, it shall never be said that Count Robert was heard to receive it with prayers for compassion, or with cries of pain or terror." He turned his face to the wall, and waited, with a strong mental exertion, the death which he conceived to be fast approaching.

His first feelings had been unavoidably of a selfish nature. The danger was too instant, and of a nature too horrible, to admit of any which involved a more comprehensive view of his calamity; and other reflections of a more distant kind, were at first swallowed up in the all engrossing thought of immediate death. But as his ideas became clearer, the safety of his Countess rushed upon his mind—what might she now be suffering! and, while he was subjected to a trial so extraordinary, for what were her weaker frame and female courage reserved? Was she still within a few yards of him, as when he lay down the last night? or had the barbarians, who had devised for him a scene so cruel, availed themselves of his and his lady's incautious

confidence, to inflict upon her some villainy of the same kind, or even yet more perfidious? Did she sleep or wake, or could she sleep within the close hearing of that horrible cry, which shook all around? He resolved to utter her name, warning her, if possible, to be upon her guard, and to answer, without venturing rashly into the apartment which contained a guest so horribly perilous.

He uttered, therefore, his wife's name, but in trembling accents, as if he had been afraid of the savage beast overhearing him.

"Brenhilda! Brenhilda!—there is danger—awake, and speak to me, but do not arise." There was no answer.—"What am I become," he said to himself, "that I call upon Brenhilda of Aspramonte, like a child on its sleeping nurse, and all because there is a wild cat in the same room with me? Shame on thee, Count of Paris! Let thy arms be rent, and thy spurs be hacked from thy heels!—What, ho!" he cried aloud, but still with a tremulous voice, "Brenhilda, we are beset, the foe are upon us!—Answer me, but stir not."

A deep growl from the monster which garrisoned his apartment was the only answer. The sound seemed to say, "Thou hast no hope!" and it ran to the knight's bosom as the genuine expression of despair.

"Perhaps, however, I am still too cold in making my misery known. What, ho! my love! Brenhilda!"

A voice, hollow and disconsolate as that which might have served an inhabitant of the grave, answered as if from a distance. "What disconsolate wretch art thou, who expectest that the living can answer thee from the habitations of the dead?"

"I am a Christian man, a free noble of the kingdom of France," answered the Count. "Yesterday the captain of five hundred men, the bravest in France—the bravest, that is, who breathe mortal air,—and I am here without a glimpse of light, to direct me how to avoid the corner in which lies a wild tiger-cat, prompt to spring upon and to devour me."

"Thou art an example," replied the voice, "and wilt not long be the last, of the changes

of fortune. I, who am now suffering in my third year, was that mighty Ursel, who rivalled Alexius Comnenus for the crown of Greece, was betrayed by my confederates, and being deprived of that eyesight which is the chief blessing of humanity, I inhabit these vaults, no distant neighbour of the wild animals by whom they are sometimes occupied, and whose cries of joy I hear when unfortunate victims like thyself are delivered up to their fury."

"Didst thou not then hear," said Count Robert, in return, "a warlike guest and his bride conducted hither last night, with sounds as it might seem of bridal music?—O, Brenhilda! hast thou, so young—so beautiful—been so treacherously done to death by means so unutterably horrible!"

"Think not," answered Ursel, as the voice had called its owner, "that the Greeks pamper their wild beasts on such lordly fare. For their enemies, which term includes not only all that are really such, but all those whom they fear or hate, they have dungeons whose locks never revolve; hot instruments of steel, to sear the eye-

balls in the head; lions and tigers, when it pleases them to make a speedy end of their captives—but these are only for the male prisoners. While for the women—if they be young and beautiful, the princes of the land have places in their bed and bower; nor are they employed, like the captives of Agamemnon's host, to draw water from an Argive spring, but are admired and adored by those whom fate has made the lords of their destiny."

"Such shall never be the doom of Brenhilda!" exclaimed Count Robert; "her husband still lives to assist her, and should he die, she knows well how to follow him without leaving a blot in the epitaph of either."

The captive did not immediately reply, and a short pause ensued, which was broken by Ursel's voice. "Stranger," he said, "what noise is that I hear?"

"Nay, I hear nothing," said Count Robert.

"But I do," said Ursel. "The cruel deprivation of my eyesight renders my other senses more acute."

"Disquiet not thyself about the matter, fel-

low-prisoner," answered the Count, "but wait the event in silence."

Suddenly a light arose in the apartment, lurid, red, and smoky. The knight had bethought him of a flint and match which he usually carried about him, and with as little noise as possible had lighted the torch by the bedside; this he instantly applied to the curtains of the bed, which, being of thin muslin, were in a moment in flames. The knight sprung, at the same instant, from his bed. The tiger, for such it was, terrified at the flame, leaped backwards as far as his chain would permit, heedless of any thing save this new object of terror. Count Robert upon this seized on a massive wooden stool, which was the only offensive weapon on which he could lay his hand, and, marking at those eyes which now reflected the blaze of fire, and which had a little ago seemed so appalling, he discharged against them this fragment of ponderous oak, with a force which less resembled human strength than the impetus with which an engine hurls a stone. He had employed his

instant of time so well, and his aim was so true, that the missile went right to the mark, and with incredible force. The skull of the tiger, which might be, perhaps, somewhat exaggerated if described as being of the very largest size, was fractured by the blow, and with the assistance of his dagger, which had fortunately been left with him, the French Count dispatched the monster, and had the satisfaction to see him grin his last, and roll, in the agony of death, those eyes which were lately so formidable.

Looking around him, he discovered, by the light of the fire which he had raised, that the apartment in which he now lay was different from that in which he had gone to bed overnight; nor could there be a stronger contrast between the furniture of both, than the flickering half-burnt remains of the thin muslin curtains, and the strong, bare, dungeon-looking walls of the room itself, or the very serviceable wooden stool, of which he had made such good use.

The knight had no leisure to form conclusions upon such a subject. He hastily extinguished

the fire, which had, indeed, nothing that it could lay hold of, and proceeded, by the light of the flambeau, to examine the apartment, and its means of entrance. It is scarce necessary to say, that he saw no communication with the room of Brenhilda, which convinced him that they had been separated the evening before under pretence of devotional scruples, in order to accomplish some most villainous design upon one or both of them. His own part of the night's adventure we have already seen; and success so far, over so formidable a danger, gave him a trembling hope that Brenhilda, by her own worth and valour, would be able to defend herself against all attacks of fraud or force, until he could find his way to her rescue. "I should have paid more regard," he said, "to Bohemond's caution last night, who, I think, intimated to me as plainly as if he had spoke it in direct terms, that that same cup of wine was a drugged potion. But then, fie upon him for an avaricious hound! how was it possible I should think he suspected any such thing, when he spoke not out like a man, but, for sheer coldness of heart, or base

self-interest, suffered me to run the risk of being poisoned by the wily despot?"

Here he heard a voice from the same quarter as before. "Ho, there! Ho, stranger! Do you live, or have you been murdered? What means this stifling smell of smoke? For God's sake, answer him who can receive no information from eyes closed, alas, for ever!"

"I am at liberty," said the Count, "and the monster destined to devour me has groaned its last. I would, my friend Ursel, since such is thy name, thou hadst the advantage of thine eyes, to have borne witness to yonder combat; it had been worth thy while, though thou shouldst have lost them a minute afterwards, and it would have greatly advantaged whoever shall have the task of compiling my history."

While he gave a thought to that vanity which strongly ruled him, he lost no time in seeking some mode of escape from the dungeon, for by that means only might he hope to recover his Countess. At last he found an entrance in the wall, but it was strongly locked and bolted. "I have found the passage," he called out; "and

its direction is the same in which thy voice is heard—But how shall I undo the door?"

"I'll teach thee that secret," said Ursel. "I would I could as easily unlock each bolt that withholds us from the open air; but, as for thy seclusion within the dungeon, heave up the door by main strength, and thou shalt lift the locks to a place where, pushing then the door from thee, the fastenings will find a grooved passage in the wall, and the door itself will open. Would that I could indeed see thee, not only because, being a gallant man, thou must be a goodly sight, but also because I should thereby know that I was not caverned in darkness for ever."

While he spoke thus, the Count made a bundle of his armour, from which he missed nothing except his sword, Tranchefer, and then proceeded to try what efforts he could make, according to the blind man's instructions, to open the door of his prison-house. Pushing in a direct line was, he soon found, attended with no effect; but when he applied his gigantic strength, and raised the door as high as it would go, he had the satisfaction to find that the bolts

yielded, though reluctantly. A space had been cut so as to allow them to move out of the socket into which they had been forced; and without the turn of a key, but by a powerful thrust forwards, a small passage was left open. The knight entered, bearing his armour in his hand.

"I hear thee," said Ursel, "O stranger! and am aware thou art come into my place of captivity. For three years have I been employed in cutting these grooves, corresponding to the sockets which hold these iron bolts, and preserving the knowledge of the secret from the prison-keepers. Twenty such bolts, perhaps, must be sawn through, ere my steps shall approach the upper air. What prospect is there that I shall have strength of mind sufficient to continue the task? Yet, credit me, noble stranger, I rejoice in having been thus far aiding to thy deliverance; for if Heaven blesses not, in any farther degree, our aspirations after freedom, we may still be a comfort to each other, while tyranny permits our mutual life."

Count Robert looked around, and shuddered

that a human being should talk of any thing approaching to comfort, connected with his residence in what seemed a living tomb. Ursel's dungeon was not above twelve feet square, vaulted in the roof, and strongly built in the walls by stones which the chisel had mortiсed closely together. A bed, a coarse footstool, like that which Robert had just launched at the head of the tiger, and a table of equally massive materials, were its only articles of furniture. On a long stone, above the bed, were these few, but terrible words:—"Zedekias Ursel, imprisoned here on the Ides of March, A.D. ——. Died and interred on the spot"—A blank was left for filling up the period. The figure of the captive could hardly be discerned amid the wildness of his dress and dishabille. The hair of his head, uncut and uncombed, descended in elf-locks, and mingled with a beard of extravagant length.

"Look on me," said the captive, "and rejoice that thou canst yet see the wretched condition to which iron-hearted tyranny can reduce a fellow-creature, both in mortal existence and in future hope."

"Was it thou," said Count Robert, whose blood ran cold in his veins, "that hadst the heart to spend thy time in sawing through the blocks of stone by which these bolts are secured?"

"Alas!" said Ursel, "what could a blind man do? Busy I must be, if I would preserve my senses. Great as the labour was, it was to me the task of three years; nor can you wonder that I should have devoted to it my whole time, when I had no other means of occupying it. Perhaps, and most likely, my dungeon does not admit the distinction of day and night; but a distant cathedral clock told me how hour after hour fled away, and found me expending them in rubbing one stone against another. But when the door gave way, I found I had only cut an access into a prison more strong than that which held me. I rejoice, nevertheless, since it has brought us together, given thee an entrance to my dungeon, and me a companion in my misery."

"Think better than that," said Count Robert, "think of liberty—think of revenge! I cannot believe such unjust treachery will end success-

fully, else needs must I say, the heavens are less just than priests tell us of. How art thou supplied with food in this dungeon of thine?"

"A warder," said Ursel, "and who, I think, understands not the Greek language—at least he never either answers or addresses me—brings a loaf and a pitcher of water, enough to supply my miserable life till two days are past. I must, therefore, pray that you will retire for a space into the next prison, so that the warder may have no means of knowing that we can hold correspondence together."

"I see not," said Count Robert, "by what access the barbarian, if he is one, can enter my dungeon without passing through yours; but no matter, I will retire into the inner or outer room, whichever it happens to be, and be thou then well aware that the warder will have some one to grapple with ere he leaves his prison-work today. Meantime, think thyself dumb as thou art blind, and be assured that the offer of freedom itself would not induce me to desert the cause of a companion in adversity."

"Alas," said the old man, "I listen to thy

promises as I should to those of the morning gale, which tells me that the sun is about to arise, although I know that I at least shall never behold it. Thou art one of those wild and undespairing knights, whom for so many years the west of Europe hath sent forth to attempt impossibilities, and from thee, therefore, I can only hope for such a fabric of relief as an idle boy would blow out of soap bubbles."

"Think better of us, old man," said Count Robert, retiring; "at least let me die with my blood warm, and believing it possible for me to be once more united to my beloved Brenhilda."

So saying, he retired into his own cell, and replaced the door, so that the operations of Ursel, which indeed were only such as three years solitude could have achieved, should escape observation when again visited by the warder. "It is ill luck," said he, when once more within his own prison—for that in which the tiger had been secured, he instinctively concluded to be destined for him—"It is ill luck that I had not found a young and able fellow-captive, instead of one decrepit by imprisonment, blind, and

broken down past exertion. But God's will be done! I will not leave behind me the poor wretch whom I have found in such a condition, though he is perfectly unable to assist me in accomplishing my escape, and is rather more likely to retard it. Meantime, before we put out the torch, let us see, if, by close examination, we can discover any door in the wall save that to the blind man's dungeon. If not, I much suspect that my descent has been made through the roof. That cup of wine—that Muse, as they called it, had a taste more like medicine than merry companion's pledge."

He began accordingly a strict survey of the walls, which he resolved to conclude by extinguishing the torch, that he might take the person who should enter his dungeon darkling and by surprise. For a similar reason, he dragged into the darkest corner the carcass of the tiger, and covered it with the remains of the bed clothes, swearing, at the same time, that a half tiger should be his crest in future, if he had the fortune, which his bold heart would not suffer him to doubt, of getting through the present dan-

ger. "But," he added, "if these necromantic vassals of hell shall raise the devil upon me, what shall I do then? And so great is the chance, that methinks I would fain dispense with extinguishing the flambeau. Yet it is childish for one dubbed in the chapel of Our Lady of the Broken Lances, to make much difference between a light room and a dark one. Let them come, as many fiends as the cell can hold, and we shall see if we receive them not as becomes a Christian knight; and surely, Our Lady, to whom I was ever a true votary, will hold it an acceptable sacrifice that I tore myself from my Brenhilda, even for a single moment, in honour of her advent, and thus led the way for our woful separation. Fiends! I defy ye in the body as in the spirit, and I retain the remains of this flambeau until some more convenient opportunity." He dashed it against the wall as he spoke, and then quietly sat down in a corner, to watch what should next happen.

Thought after thought chased each other through his mind. His confidence in his wife's fidelity, and his trust in her uncommon strength

and activity, were the greatest comforts which he had; nor could her danger present itself to him in any shape so terrible, but that he found consolation in these reflections: "She is pure," he said, "as the dew of heaven, and heaven will not abandon its own."

CHAPTER V.

Strange ape of man! who loathes thee while he scorns thee;
Half a reproach to us and half a jest.
What fancies can be ours ere we have pleasure
In viewing our own form, our pride and passions,
Reflected in a shape grotesque as thine!

ANONYMOUS.

COUNT ROBERT OF PARIS having ensconced himself behind the ruins of the bed, so that he could not well be observed, unless a strong light was at once flung upon the place of his retreat, waited with anxiety how and in what manner the warder of the dungeon, charged with the task of bringing food to the prisoners, should make himself visible; nor was it long ere symptoms of his approach began to be heard and observed.

A light was partially seen, as from a trap-door opening in the roof, and a voice was heard to utter these words in Anglo-Saxon, "Leap, sirrah; come, no delay; leap, my good Sylvan, show your honour's activity." A strange chuckling hoarse voice, in a language totally unintelligible to Count Robert, was heard to respond, as if disputing the orders which were received.

"What, sir," said his companion, "you must contest the point, must you? Nay, if thou art so lazy, I must give your honour a ladder, and perhaps a kick to hasten your journey." Something then, of very great size, in the form of a human being, jumped down from the trap-door, though the height might be above fourteen feet. This figure was gigantic, being upwards of seven feet high. In its left hand it held a torch, and in its right a skein of fine silk, which unwinding itself as it descended, remained unbroken, though it was easy to conceive it could not have afforded a creature so large any support in his descent from the roof. He alighted with perfect safety and activity upon his feet, and, as if rebounding from the floor, he sprung upwards

again, so as almost to touch the roof. In this last gambaud the torch which he bore was extinguished; but this extraordinary warder whirled it round his head with infinite velocity, so that it again ignited. The bearer, who appeared to intend the accomplishment of this object, endeavoured to satisfy himself that it was really attained, by approaching, as if cautiously, its left hand to the flame of the torch. This practical experiment seemed attended with consequences which the creature had not expected, for it howled with pain, shaking the burnt hand, and chattering as if bemoaning itself.

"Take heed there, Sylvanus!" said the same voice in Anglo-Saxon, and in a tone of rebuke. "Ho, there! mind thy duty, Sylvan! Carry food to the blind man, and stand not there to play thyself, lest I trust thee not again alone on such an errand!"

The creature—for it would have been rash to have termed it a man—turning its eye upwards to the place from whence the voice came, answered with a dreadful grin and shaking of its fist, yet presently began to undo a parcel, and

rummage in the pockets of a sort of jerkin and pantaloons which it wore, seeking, it appeared, a bunch of keys, which at length it produced, while it took from the pocket a loaf of bread. Heating the stone of the wall, it affixed the torch to it by a piece of wax, and then cautiously looked out for the entrance to the old man's dungeon, which it opened with a key selected from the bunch. Within the passage it seemed to look for and discover the handle of a pump, at which it filled a pitcher that it bore, and bringing back the fragments of the former loaf, and remains of the pitcher of water, it eat a little, as if it were in sport, and very soon making a frightful grimace, flung the fragments away. The Count of Paris, in the meanwhile, watched anxiously the proceedings of this unknown animal. His first thought was, that the creature, whose limbs were so much larger than humanity, whose grimaces were so frightful, and whose activity seemed supernatural, could be no other than the Devil himself, or some of his imps, whose situation and office in those gloomy regions seemed by no means hard to conjecture. The human

voice, however, which he had heard, was less that of a necromancer conjuring a fiend, than that of a person giving commands to a wild animal, over whom he had, by training, obtained a great superiority.

"A shame on it," said the Count, "if I suffer a common jackanapes,—for such I take this devil-seeming beast to be, although twice as large as any of its fellows whom I have ever seen,—to throw an obstacle in the way of my obtaining daylight and freedom! Let us but watch, and the chance is that we make that furry gentleman our guide to the upper regions."

Meantime the creature, which rummaged about everywhere, at length discovered the body of the tiger,—touched it, stirred it, with many strange motions, and seemed to lament and wonder at its death. At once it seemed struck with the idea that some one must have slain it, and Count Robert had the mortification to see it once more select the key, and spring towards the door of Ursel's prison with such alacrity, that had its intention been to strangle him, it would have accomplished its purpose before the

interference of Count Robert could have prevented its revenge taking place. Apparently, however, it reflected, that for reasons which seemed satisfactory, the death of the tiger could not be caused by the unfortunate Ursel, but had been accomplished by some one concealed within the outer prison.

Slowly grumbling, therefore, and chattering to itself, and peeping anxiously into every corner, the tremendous creature, so like, yet so very unlike to the human form, came stealing along the walls, moving whatever he thought could seclude a man from his observation. Its extended legs and arms were protruded forward with great strides, and its sharp eyes, on the watch to discover the object of its search, kept prying, with the assistance of the torch, into every corner.

Considering the vicinity of Alexius's collection of animals, the reader, by this time, can have little doubt that the creature in question, whose appearance seemed to the Count of Paris so very problematical, was a specimen of that

gigantic species of ape—if it is not indeed some animal more nearly allied to ourselves—to which, I believe, naturalists have given the name of the Ourang Outang. This creature differs from the rest of its fraternity, in being comparatively more docile and serviceable; and though possessing the power of imitation which is common to the whole race, yet making use of it less in mere mockery, than in a desire of improvement and instruction perfectly unknown to its brethren. The aptitude which it possesses of acquiring information, is surprisingly great, and probably, if placed in a favourable situation, it might admit of being domesticated in a considerable degree; but such advantages the ardour of scientific curiosity has never afforded this creature. The last we have heard of was seen, we believe, in the Island of Sumatra—it was of great size and strength, and upwards of seven feet high. It died defending desperately its innocent life against a party of Europeans, who we cannot help thinking might have better employed the superiority which their knowledge gave them over the poor

native of the forest. It was probably this creature, seldom seen, but when once seen never forgotten, which occasioned the ancient belief in the god Pan, with his sylvans and satyrs. Nay, but for the gift of speech, which we cannot suppose any of the family to have attained, we should have believed the satyr seen by St Anthony in the desert to have belonged to this tribe.

We can, therefore, the more easily credit the annals which attest that the collection of natural history belonging to Alexius Comnenus, preserved an animal of this kind, which had been domesticated and reclaimed to a surprising extent, and showed a degree of intelligence never perhaps to be attained in any other case. These explanations being premised, we return to the thread of our story.

The animal advanced with long noiseless steps; its shadow on the wall, when it held the torch so as to make it visible to the Frank, forming another fiend-resembling mimicry of its own large figure and extravagant-looking members. Count

Robert remained in his lurking-hole, in no hurry to begin a strife, of which it was impossible to foretell the end. In the mean time, the man of the woods came nigh, and every step by which he approached, caused the Count's heart to vibrate almost audibly, at the idea of meeting danger of a nature so strange and new. At length the creature approached the bed—his hideous eyes were fixed on those of the Count; and, as much surprised at seeing him as Robert was at the meeting, he skipped about fifteen paces backwards at one spring, with a cry of instinctive terror, and then advanced on tiptoe, holding his torch as far forward as he could, between him and the object of his fears, as if to examine him at the safest possible distance. Count Robert caught up a fragment of the bedstead, large enough to form a sort of club, with which he menaced the native of the wilds.

Apparently this poor creature's education, like education of most kinds, had not been acquired without blows, of which the recollection was as fresh as that of the lessons which they enforced.

Sir Robert of Paris was a man at once to discover and to avail himself of the advantage obtained by finding that he possessed a degree of ascendency over his enemy, which he had not suspected. He erected his warlike figure, assumed a step as if triumphant in the lists, and advanced threatening his enemy with his club, as he would have menaced his antagonist with the redoubtable Tranchefer. The man of the woods, on the other hand, obviously gave way, and converted his cautious advance into a retreat no less cautious. Yet apparently the creature had not renounced some plan of resistance; he chattered in an angry and hostile tone, held out his torch in opposition, and seemed about to strike the crusader with it. Count Robert, however, determined to take his opponent at advantage, while his fears influenced him, and for this purpose resolved, if possible, to deprive him of his natural superiority in strength and agility, which his singular form showed he could not but possess over the human species. A master of his weapon, therefore, the Count

mènaced his savage antagonist with a stroke on the right side of his head, but suddenly averting the blow, struck him with his whole force on the left temple, and in an instant was kneeling above him, when, drawing his dagger, he was about to deprive him of life.

The Ourang Outang, ignorant of the nature of this new weapon with which he was threatened, attempted, at one and the same moment, to rise from the ground, overthrow his antagonist, and wrench the dagger from his grasp. In the first attempt, he would probably have succeeded; and as it was, he gained his knees, and seemed likely to prevail in the struggle, when he became sensible that the knight, drawing his poniard sharply through his grasp, had cut his paw severely, and seeing him aim the trenchant weapon at his throat, became probably aware that his enemy had his life at command. He suffered himself to be borne backwards without further resistance, with a deep wailing and melancholy cry, having in it something human, which excited compassion. He covered his eyes with the unwounded hand,

as if he would have hid from his own sight the death which seemed approaching him.

Count Robert, notwithstanding his military frenzy, was, in ordinary matters, a calm-tempered and mild man, and particularly benevolent to the lower classes of creation. The thought rushed through his mind, "Why take from this unfortunate monster the breath which is in its nostrils, after which it cannot know another existence? And then, may it not be some prince or knight changed to this grotesque shape, that it may help to guard these vaults, and the wonderful adventures that attach to them? Should I not, then, be guilty of a crime by slaying him, when he has rendered himself rescue or no rescue, which he has done as completely as his transformed figure permits; and if he be actually a bestial creature, may he not have some touch of gratitude? I have heard the minstrels sing the lay of Androcles and the Lion. I will be on my guard with him."

So saying, he rose from above the man of the woods, and permitted him also to arise. The creature seemed sensible of the clemency, for he

muttered, in a low and supplicating tone, which seemed at once to crave for mercy, and to return thanks for what he had already experienced. He wept too, as he saw the blood dropping from his wound, and with an anxious countenance, which had more of the human now that it was composed into an expression of pain and melancholy, seemed to await in terror the doom of a being more powerful than himself.

The pocket which the knight wore under his armour, capable of containing but few things, had, however, some vulnerary balsam, for which its owner had often occasion, a little lint, and a small roll of linen; these the knight took out, and motioned to the animal to hold forth his wounded hand. The man of the woods obeyed with hesitation and reluctance, and Count Robert applied the balsam and the dressings, acquainting his patient, at the same time, in a severe tone of voice, that perhaps he did wrong in putting to his use a balsam compounded for the service of the noblest knights; but that, if he saw the least sign of his making an ungrateful use of the benefit he had conferred, he would bury the

dagger, of which he had felt the efficacy, to the very handle in his body.

The Sylvan looked fixedly upon Count Robert, almost as if he understood the language used to him, and, making one of its native murmurs, it stooped to the earth, kissed the feet of the knight, and, embracing his knees, seemed to swear to him eternal gratitude and fidelity. Accordingly, when the Count retired to the bed and assumed his armour, to await the re-opening of the trap-door, the animal sat down by his side, directing its eyes in the line with his, and seemed quietly to wait till the door should open.

After waiting about an hour, a slight noise was heard in the upper chamber, and the wild man plucked the Frank by the cloak, as if to call his attention to what was about to happen. The same voice which had before spoken, was, after a whistle or two, heard to call, "Sylvan, Sylvan! where loiterest thou? Come instantly, or, by the rood, thou shalt abye thy sloth!"

The poor monster, as Trinculo might have called him, seemed perfectly aware of the mean-

ing of this threat, and showed his sense of it by pressing close to the side of Count Robert, making at the same time a kind of whining, entreating, it would seem, the knight's protection. Forgetting the great improbability there was, even in his own opinion, that the creature could understand him, Count Robert said, "Why, my friend, thou hast already learned the principal court prayer of this country, by which men entreat permission to speak and live. Fear nothing, poor creature—I am thy protector."

"Sylvan! what, ho!" said the voice again; "whom hast thou got for a companion?—some of the fiends, or ghosts of murdered men, who they say are frequent in these dungeons? or dost thou converse with the old blind rebel Grecian? —or, finally, is it true that men say of thee, that thou canst talk intelligibly when thou wilt, and only gibberest and chatterest for fear thou art sent to work? Come, thou lazy rascal! thou shalt have the advantage of the ladder to ascend by, though thou needst it no more than a daw to ascend the steeple of the Cathedral of St Sophie.

Come along then," he said, putting a ladder down the trap-door, " and put me not to the trouble of descending to fetch thee, else, by St Swithin, it shall be the worse for thee. Come along, therefore, like a good fellow, and for once I shall spare the whip."

The animal, apparently, was moved by this rhetoric, for, with a doleful look, which Count Robert saw by means of the nearly extinguished torch, he seemed to bid him farewell, and to creep away towards the ladder with the same excellent good-will wherewith a condemned criminal performs the like evolution. But no sooner did the Count look angry, and shake the formidable dagger, than the intelligent animal seemed at once to take his resolution, and clenching his hands firmly together in the fashion of one who has made up his mind, he returned from the ladder's foot, and drew up behind Count Robert,—with the air, however, of a deserter, who feels himself but little at home when called into the field against his ancient commander.

In a short time the warder's patience was

exhausted, and despairing of the sylvan's voluntary return, he resolved to descend in quest of him. Down the ladder he came, a bundle of keys in one hand, the other assisting his descent, and a sort of dark lantern, whose bottom was so fashioned that he could wear it upon his head like a hat. He had scarce stept on the floor, when he was surrounded by the nervous arms of the Count of Paris. At first the warder's idea was, that he was seized by the recusant Sylvan.

"How now, villain!" he said; "let me go, or thou shalt die the death."

"Thou diest thyself," said the Count, who, between the surprise and his own skill in wrestling, felt fully his advantage in the struggle.

"Treason! treason!" cried the warder, hearing by the voice that a stranger had mingled in the contest; "help, ho! above there! help, Hereward—Varangian!—Anglo-Saxon, or whatever accursed name thou callest thyself!"

While he spoke thus, the irresistible grasp of Count Robert seized his throat, and choked his utterance. They fell heavily, the jailer under-

most, upon the floor of the dungeon, and Robert of Paris, the necessity of whose case excused the action, plunged his dagger in the throat of the unfortunate. Just as he did so, a noise of armour was heard, and, rattling down the ladder, our acquaintance Hereward stood on the floor of the dungeon. The light, which had rolled from the head of the warder, continued to show him streaming with blood, and in the death-grasp of a stranger. Hereward hesitated not to fly to his assistance, and, seizing upon the Count of Paris at the same advantage which that knight had gained over his own adversary a moment before, held him forcibly down with his face to the earth.

Count Robert was one of the strongest men of that military age; but then so was the Varangian; and save that the latter had obtained a decided advantage by having his antagonist beneath him, it could not certainly have been conjectured which way the combat was to go.

"Yield! as your own jargon goes, rescue or no rescue," said the Varangian, "or die on the point of my dagger!"

"A French Count never yields," answered Robert, who began to conjecture with what sort of person he was engaged, "above all, to a vagabond slave like thee!" With this he made an effort to rise, so sudden, so strong, so powerful, that he had almost freed himself from the Varangian's grasp, had not Hereward, by a violent exertion of his great strength, preserved the advantage he had gained, and raised his poniard to end the strife for ever; but a loud chuckling laugh of an unearthly sound was at this instant heard. The Varangian's extended arm was seized with vigour, while a rough arm, embracing his throat, turned him over on his back, and gave the French Count an opportunity of springing up.

"Death to thee, wretch!" said the Varangian, scarce knowing whom he threatened; but the man of the woods apparently had an awful recollection of the prowess of human beings. He fled, therefore, swiftly up the ladder, and left Hereward and his deliverer to fight it out with what success chance might determine between them.

The circumstances seemed to argue a desperate combat; both were tall, strong, and courageous, both had defensive armour, and the fatal and desperate poniard was their only offensive weapons. They paused facing each other, and examined eagerly into their respective means of defence before hazarding a blow, which, if it missed, its attaint would certainly be fatally requited. During this deadly pause, a gleam shone from the trap-door above, as the wild and alarmed visage of the man of the woods was seen peering down by the light of a newly kindled torch which he held as low into the dungeon as he well could.

"Fight bravely, comrade," said Count Robert of Paris, "for we no longer battle in private; this respectable person having chosen to constitute himself judge of the field."

Hazardous as his situation was, the Varangian looked up, and was so struck with the wild and terrified expression which the creature had assumed, and the strife between curiosity and terror which its grotesque features exhibit-

ed, that he could not help bursting into a fit of laughter.

"Sylvan is among those," said Hereward, "who would rather hold the candle to a dance so formidable than join in it himself."

"Is there then," said Count Robert, "any absolute necessity that thou and I perform this dance at all?"

"None but our own pleasure," answered Hereward, "for I suspect there is not between us any legitimate cause of quarrel demanding to be fought out in such a place, and before such a spectator. Thou art, if I mistake not, the bold Frank, who was yesternight imprisoned in this place with a tiger, chained within no distant spring of his bed?"

"I am," answered the Count.

"And where is the animal who was opposed to thee?"

"He lies yonder," answered the Count, "never again to be the object of more terror than the deer whom he may have preyed on in his day." He pointed to the body of the tiger, which

Hereward examined by the light of the dark-lantern already mentioned.

"And this, then, was thy handiwork?" said the wondering Anglo-Saxon.

"Sooth to say it was—" answered the Count, with indifference.

"And thou hast slain my comrade of this strange watch?" said the Varangian.

"Mortally wounded him at the least," said Count Robert.

"With your patience, I will be beholden to you for a moment's truce, while I examine his wound," said Hereward.

"Assuredly," answered the Count; "blighted be the arm which strikes a foul blow at an open antagonist!"

Without demanding further security, the Varangian quitted his posture of defence and precaution, and set himself, by the assistance of the dark lantern, to examine the wound of the first warder who appeared on the field, who seemed, by his Roman military dress, to be a soldier of the bands called Immortals. He found him in the death agony, but still able to speak.

"So, Varangian, thou art come at last,—and it is to thy sloth or treachery that I am to impute my fate?—Nay, answer me not!—The stranger struck me over the collar-bone—had we lived long together, or met often, I had done the like by thee, to wipe out the memory of certain transactions at the Golden Gate.—I know the use of the knife too well to doubt the effect of a blow aimed over the collar-bone by so strong a hand—I feel it coming. The Immortal, so called, becomes now, if priests say true, an immortal indeed, and Sebastes of Mytilene's bow is broken ere his quiver is half emptied."

The robber Greek sunk back in Hereward's arms, and closed his life with a groan, which was the last sound he uttered. The Varangian laid the body at length on the dungeon floor.

"This is a perplexed matter"—he said; "I am certainly not called upon to put to death a brave man, although my national enemy, because he hath killed a miscreant who was privately meditating my own murder. Neither is this a place or a light by which to fight as be-

comes the champions of two nations. Let that quarrel be still for the present.—How say you then, noble sir, if we adjourn the present dispute till we effect your deliverance from the dungeons of the Blacquernal, and your restoration to your own friends and followers? If a poor Varangian should be of service to you in this matter, would you, when it was settled, refuse to meet him in fair fight, with your national weapons or his own?"

"If," said Count Robert, "whether friend or enemy, thou wilt extend thy assistance to my wife, who is also imprisoned somewhere in this inhospitable palace, be assured, that whatever be thy rank, whatever be thy country, whatever be thy condition, Robert of Paris will, at thy choice, proffer thee his right hand in friendship, or raise it against thee in fair and manly battle—a strife not of hatred, but of honour and esteem; and this I vow by the soul of Charlemagne, my ancestor, and by the shrine of my patroness, Our Lady of the Broken Lances."

"Enough said," replied Hereward. "I am

as much bound to the assistance of your Lady Countess, being a poor exile, as if I were the first in the ranks of chivalry; for if any thing can make the cause of worth and bravery yet more obligatory, it must be its being united with that of a helpless and suffering female."

"I ought," said Count Robert, "to be here silent, without loading thy generosity with farther requests; yet thou art a man, whom, if fortune has not smiled at thy birth, by ordaining thee to be born within the ranks of noblesse and knighthood, yet Providence hath done thee more justice by giving thee a more gallant heart than is always possessed, I fear, by those who are inwoven in the gayest wreath of chivalry. There lingers here in these dungeons, for I cannot say he lives—a blind old man, to whom for three years every thing beyond his prison has been a universal blot. His food is bread and water, his intercourse limited to the conversation of a sullen warder, and if death can ever come as a deliverer, it must be to this dark old man. What sayst thou? Shall he, so unutterably miserable,

not profit by perhaps the only opportunity of freedom that may ever occur to him?"

"By St Dunstan," answered the Varangian, "thou keepest over truly the oath thou hast taken as a redresser of wrongs! Thine own case is wellnigh desperate, and thou art willing to make it utterly so by uniting with it that of every unhappy person whom fate throws in thy way!"

"The more of human misery we attempt to relieve," said Robert of Paris, "the more we shall carry with us the blessing of our merciful saints, and Our Lady of the Broken Lances, who views with so much pain every species of human suffering or misfortune, save that which occurs within the inclosure of the lists. But come, valiant Anglo-Saxon, resolve me on my request as speedily as thou canst. There is something in thy face of candour as well as sense, and it is with no small confidence that I desire to see us set forth in quest of my beloved Countess, who, when her deliverance is once achieved, will be a powerful aid to us in recovering that of others."

"So be it, then," said the Varangian; "we will proceed in quest of the Countess Brenhilda; and if, on recovering her, we find ourselves strong enough to procure the freedom of the dark old man, my cowardice, or want of compassion, shall never stop the attempt."

CHAPTER VI.

'Tis strange that, in the dark sulphureous mine,
Where wild ambition piles its ripening stores
Of slumbering thunder, Love will interpose
His tiny torch, and cause the stern explosion
To burst, when the deviser 's least aware.

Anonymous.

About noon of the same day, Agelastes met with Achilles Tatius, the commander of the Varangian guard, in those ruins of the Egyptian temple in which we formerly mentioned Hereward having had an interview with the philosopher. They met, as it seemed, in a very different humour. Tatius was gloomy, melancholy, and downcast; while the philosopher maintained the calm indifference which procured for him, and in some sort deserved, the title of the Elephant.

"Thou blenchest, Achilles Tatius," said the philosopher, "now that thou hast frankly opposed thyself to all the dangers which stood between thee and greatness. Thou art like the idle boy who turned the mill-stream upon the machine, and that done, instead of making the proper use of it, was terrified at seeing it in motion."

"Thou dost me wrong, Agelastes," answered the Acolyte, "foul wrong; I am but like the mariner, who, although determined upon his voyage, yet cannot forbear a sorrowing glance at the shore, before he parts with it, it may be for ever."

"It may have been right to think of this, but pardon me, valiant Tatius, when I tell you the account should have been made up before; and the grandson of Alguric the Hun ought to have computed chances and consequences ere he stretched his hand to his master's diadem."

"Hush! for Heaven's sake," said Tatius, looking round; "that, thou knowest, is a secret between our two selves; for if Nicephorus, the Cæsar, should learn it, where were we and our conspiracy?"

"Our bodies on the gibbet, probably," answered Agelastes, "and our souls divorced from them, and in the way of discovering the secrets which thou hast hitherto taken upon trust."

"Well," said Achilles, "and should not the consciousness of the possibility of this fate render us cautious?"

"Cautious *men* if you will," answered Agelastes, "but not timid children."

"Stone walls can hear—" said the Follower, lowering his voice. "Dionysius the tyrant, I have read, had an Ear which conveyed to him the secrets spoken within his state-prison at Syracuse."

"And that Ear is still stationary at Syracuse," said the philosopher. "Tell me, my most simple friend, art thou afraid it has been transported hither in one night, as the Latins believe of Our Lady's house at Loretto?"

"No," answered Achilles, "but in an affair so important too much caution cannot be used."

"Well, thou most cautious of candidates for empire, and most cold of military leaders, know

that the Cæsar, deeming, I think, that there is no chance of the empire falling to any one but himself, hath taken in his head to consider his succession to Alexius as a matter of course, whenever the election takes place. In consequence, as matters of course are usually matters of indifference, he has left all thoughts of securing his interest upon this material occasion to thee and to me, while the foolish voluptuary hath himself run mad—for what think you? Something between man and woman—female in her lineaments, her limbs, and a part at least of her garments; but, so help me St George, most masculine in the rest of her attire, in her propensities, and in her exercises."

"The Amazonian wife, thou meanest," said Achilles, "of that iron-handed Frank, who dashed to pieces last night the golden lion of Solomon with a blow of his fist? By St George, the least which can come of such an amour is broken bones!"

"That," said Agelastes, "is not quite so improbable as that Dionysius's Ear should fly

hither from Syracuse in a single night; but he is presumptuous in respect of the influence which his supposed good looks have gained him among the Grecian dames."

"He was too presumptuous, I suppose," said Achilles Tatius, "to make a proper allowance for his situation as Cæsar, and the prospect of his being Emperor."

"Meantime," said Agelastes, "I have promised him an interview with his Bradamante, who may perhaps reward his tender epithets of *Zoé kai pruchie*, by divorcing his amorous soul from his unrivalled person."

"Meantime," said the Follower, "thou obtainest, I conclude, such orders and warrants as the Cæsar can give for the furtherance of our plot?"

"Assuredly," said Agelastes; "it is an opportunity not to be lost. This love fit, or mad fit, has blinded him; and without exciting too much attention to the progress of the plot, we can thus in safety conduct matters our own way, without causing malevolent remarks; and though I am conscious that, in doing so, I act somewhat at variance with my age and character,

yet the end being to convert a worthy Follower into an Imperial Leader, I shame me not in procuring that interview with the lady, of which the Cæsar, as they term him, is so desirous.—What progress, meanwhile, hast thou made with the Varangians, who are, in respect of execution, the very arm of our design?"

"Scarce so good as I could wish," said Achilles Tatius; "yet I have made sure of some two or three score of those whom I found most accessible; nor have I any doubt, that, when the Cæsar is set aside, their cry will be for Achilles Tatius."

"And what of the gallant who assisted at our prelections?" said Agelastes; "your Edward, as Alexius termed him?"

"I have made no impression upon him," said the Follower; "and I am sorry for it, for he is one whom his comrades think well of, and would gladly follow. Meantime I have placed him as an additional sentinel upon the iron-witted Count of Paris, whom, both having an inveterate love of battle, he is very likely to put to death; and if it is afterwards challenged by the crusa-

ders as a cause of war, it is only delivering up the Varangian, whose personal hatred will needs be represented as having occasioned the catastrophe. All this being prepared beforehand, how and when shall we deal with the Emperor?"

"For that," said Agelastes, "we must consult the Cæsar, who, although his expected happiness of to-day is not more certain than the state preferment that he expects to-morrow, and although his ideas are much more anxiously fixed upon his success with this said Countess than his succession to the empire, will, nevertheless, expect to be treated as the head of the enterprise for accelerating the latter. But, to speak my opinion, valiant Tatius, to-morrow will be the last day that Alexius shall hold the reins of empire."

"Let me know for certain," said the Follower, "as soon as thou canst, that I may warn our brethren, who are to have in readiness the insurgent citizens, and those of the Immortals who are combined with us, in the neighbourhood of the court, and in readiness to act—And, above all,

that I may disperse upon distant guards such Varangians as I cannot trust."

"Rely upon me," said Agelastes, "for the most accurate information and instructions, so soon as I have seen Nicephorus Briennius. One word permit me to ask—In what manner is the wife of the Cæsar to be disposed of?"

"Somewhere," said the Follower, "where I can never be compelled to hear more of her history. Were it not for that nightly pest of her lectures, I could be good-natured enough to take care of her destiny myself, and teach her the difference betwixt a real emperor and this Briennius, who thinks so much of himself." So saying, they separated; the Follower elated in look and manner considerably above what he had been when they met.

Agelastes looked after his companion with a scornful laugh. "There," he said, "goes a fool, whose lack of sense prevents his eyes from being dazzled by the torch which cannot fail to consume him. A half-bred, half-acting, half-thinking, half-daring caitiff, whose poorest thoughts—and those which deserve that name

must be poor indeed—are not the produce of his own understanding. He expects to circumvent the fiery, haughty, and proud Nicephorus Briennius! If he does so, it will not be by his own policy, and still less by his valour. Nor shall Anna Comnena, the soul of wit and genius, be chained to such an unimaginative log as yonder half barbarian. No—she shall have a husband of pure Grecian extraction, and well stored with that learning which was studied when Rome was great, and Greece illustrious. Nor will it be the least charm of the Imperial throne, that it is partaken by a partner whose personal studies have taught her to esteem and value those of the Emperor." He took a step or two with conscious elevation, and then, as conscience-checked, he added, in a suppressed voice, "But then, if Anna were destined for Empress, it follows of course that Alexius must die—no consent could be trusted to.—And what then?—the death of an ordinary man is indifferent, when it plants on the throne a philosopher and a historian; and at what time were the possessors of the empire curious to enquire when or by whose agency

their predecessors died?—Diogenes! Ho, Diogenes!" The slave did not immediately come, so that Agelastes, wrapt in the anticipation of his greatness, had time to add a few more words —"Tush—I must reckon with Heaven, say the priests, for many things, so I will throw this also into the account. The death of the Emperor may be twenty ways achieved without my having the blame of it. The blood which we have shed may spot our hand, if closely regarded, but it shall scarce stain our forehead." Diogenes here entered—"Has the Frank lady been removed?" said the philosopher.

The slave signified his assent.

"How did she bear her removal?"

"As authorized by your lordship, indifferently well. She had resented her separation from her husband, and her being detained in the palace, and committed some violence upon the slaves of the Household, several of whom were said to be slain, although we perhaps ought only to read sorely frightened. She recognised me at once, and when I told her that I came to offer her a day's retirement in your own lodgings,

until it should be in your power to achieve the liberation of her husband, she at once consented, and I deposited her in the secret Cytherean garden-house."

"Admirably done, my faithful Diogenes," said the philosopher; "thou art like the genii who attended on the eastern talismans; I have but to intimate my will to thee, and it is accomplished."

Diogenes bowed deeply, and withdrew.

"Yet remember, slave!" said Agelastes, speaking to himself; "there is danger in knowing too much—and should my character ever become questioned, too many of my secrets are in the power of Diogenes."

At this moment a blow thrice repeated, and struck upon one of the images without, which had been so framed as to return a tingling sound, and in so far deserved the praise of being vocal, interrupted his soliloquy.

"There knocks," said he, "one of our allies; who can it be that comes so late?" He touched the figure of Isis with his staff, and the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius entered in the full Gre-

cian habit, and that graceful dress anxiously arranged to the best advantage. "Let me hope, my lord," said Agelastes, receiving the Cæsar with an apparently grave and reserved face, "your Highness comes to tell me that your sentiments are changed on reflection, and that whatever you had to confer about with this Frankish lady, may be at least deferred until the principal part of our conspiracy has been successfully executed."

"Philosopher," answered the Cæsar, "no. My resolution, once taken, is not the sport of circumstances. Believe me, that I have not finished so many labours without being ready to undertake others. The favour of Venus is the reward of the labours of Mars, nor would I think it worth while to worship the god armipotent with the toil and risk attending his service, unless I had previously attained some decided proofs that I was wreathed with the myrtle, intimating the favour of his beautiful mistress."

"I beg pardon for my boldness," said Agelastes; "but has your Imperial Highness reflected, that you were wagering, with the wildest rashness, an empire, including thine own life, mine,

and all who are joined with us in a hardy scheme? And against what were they waged? Against the very precarious favour of a woman, who is altogether divided betwixt fiend and female, and in either capacity is most likely to be fatal to our present scheme, either by her good will, or by the offence which she may take. If she prove such as you wish, she will desire to keep her lover by her side, and to spare him the danger of engaging in a perilous conspiracy; and if she remains, as the world believe her, constant to her husband, and to the sentiments she vowed to him at the altar, you may guess what cause of offence you are likely to give, by urging a suit which she has already received so very ill."

"Pshaw, old man! Thou turnest a dotard, and in the great knowledge thou possessest of other things, hast forgotten the knowledge best worth knowing—that of the beautiful part of the creation. Think of the impression likely to be made by a gallant neither ignoble in situation, nor unacceptable in presence, upon a lady who must fear the consequences of refusal! Come, Agelastes, let me have no more of thy croaking,

auguring bad fortune like the raven from the blasted oak on the left hand; but declaim, as well thou canst, how faint heart never won fair lady, and how those best deserve empire who can wreathe the myrtles of Venus with the laurels of Mars. Come, man, undo me the secret entrance which combines these magical ruins with groves that are fashioned rather like those of Cytherea or Naxos."

"It must be as you will!" said the philosopher, with a deep and somewhat affected sigh.

"Here, Diogenes!" called aloud the Cæsar; "when thou art summoned, mischief is not far distant. Come, undo the secret entrance. Mischief, my trusty negro, is not so distant but she will answer the first clatter of the stones."

The negro looked at his master, who returned him a glance acquiescing in the Cæsar's proposal. Diogenes then went to a part of the ruined wall which was covered by some climbing shrubs, all of which he carefully removed. This showed a little postern door, closed irregularly, and filled up, from the threshold to the top, with large square stones, all of which the slave took out

and piled aside, as if for the purpose of replacing them. "I leave thee," said Agelastes to the negro, "to guard this door, and let no one enter, except he has the sign, upon the peril of thy life. It were dangerous it should be left open at this period of the day."

The obsequious Diogenes put his hand to his sabre and to his head, as if to signify the usual promise of fidelity or death, by which those of his condition generally expressed their answer to their master's commands. Diogenes then lighted a small lantern, and pulling out a key, opened an inner door of wood, and prepared to step forward.

"Hold, friend Diogenes," said the Cæsar; "thou wantest not thy lantern to discern an honest man, whom, if thou didst seek, I must needs say thou hast come to the wrong place to find one. Nail thou up these creeping shrubs before the entrance of the place, and abide thou there, as already directed, till our return, to parry the curiosity of any who may be attracted by the sight of the private passage."

The black slave drew back as he gave the lamp

to the Cæsar, and Agelastes followed the light through a long, but narrow, arched passage, well supplied with air from space to space, and not neglected in the inside to the degree which its exterior would have implied.

"I will not enter with you into the gardens," said Agelastes, "or to the bower of Cytherea, where I am too old to be a worshipper. Thou thyself, I think, Imperial Cæsar art well aware of the road, having travelled it divers times; and, if I mistake not, for the fairest reasons."

"The more thanks," said the Cæsar, "are due to mine excellent friend Agelastes, who forgets his own age to accommodate the youth of his friends."

CHAPTER VII.

We must now return to the dungeons of the Blacquernal, where circumstances had formed at least a temporary union between the stout Varangian and Count Robert of Paris, who had a stronger resemblance to each other in their dispositions, than probably either of them would have been willing to admit. The virtues of the Varangian were all of that natural and unrefined kind which nature herself dictates to a gallant man, to whom a total want of fear, and the most prompt alacrity to meet danger, had been attributes of a life-long standing. The Count, on the other hand, had all that bravery, generosity, and love of adventure, which was possessed by the rude soldier, with the virtues, partly real, partly fantastic, which those of his rank and country ac-

quired from the spirit of chivalry. The one might be compared to the diamond as it came from the mine, before it had yet received the advantages of cutting and setting; the other was the ornamented gem, which, cut into faucettes and richly set, had lost perhaps a little of its original substance, yet still, at the same time, to the eye of an inspector, had something more showy and splendid than when it was, according to the phrase of lapidaries, *en brut*. In the one case, the value was more artificial; in the other, it was the more natural and real of the two. Chance, therefore, had made a temporary alliance between two men, the foundation of whose characters bore such strong resemblance to each other, that they were only separated by a course of education, which had left rigid prejudices on both sides, and which prejudices were not unlikely to run counter to each other. The Varangian commenced his conversation with the Count in a tone of familiarity, approaching nearer to rudeness than the speaker was aware of, and much of which, though most innocently intended by Hereward, might be taken amiss by his new brother in arms. The

most offensive part of his deportment, however, was a blunt, bold disregard to the title of those whom he addressed, adhering thereby to the manners of the Saxons, from whom he drew his descent, and which was likely to be at least unpleasing to the Franks as well as Normans, who had already received and become very tenacious of the privileges of the feudal system, the mummery of heraldry, and the warlike claims assumed by knights, as belonging only to their own order.

Hereward was apt, it must be owned, to think too little of these distinctions; while he had at least a sufficient tendency to think enough of the power and wealth of the Greek empire which he served,—of the dignity inherent in Alexius Comnenus, and which he was also disposed to grant to the Grecian officers, who, under the Emperor, commanded his own corps, and particularly to Achilles Tatius. This man Hereward knew to be a coward, and half-suspected to be a villain. Still, however, the Follower was always the direct channel through which the Imperial graces were conferred on the Varan-

gians in general, as well as upon Hereward himself; and he had always the policy to represent such favours as being more or less indirectly the consequence of his own intercession. He was supposed vigorously to espouse the quarrel of the Varangians, in all the disputes between them and the other corps; he was liberal and open-handed; gave every soldier his due; and, bating the trifling circumstance of valour, which was not particularly his forte, it would have been difficult for these strangers to have demanded a leader more to their wishes. Besides this, our friend Hereward was admitted by him into his society, attended him, as we have seen, upon secret expeditions, and shared, therefore, deeply in what may be termed, by an expressive, though vulgar phrase, the sneaking kindness entertained for this new Achilles by the greater part of his myrmidons.

Their attachment might be explained, perhaps, as a liking to their commander, as strong as could well exist with a marvellous lack of honour and esteem. The scheme, therefore, formed by Hereward to effect the deliverance

of the Count of Paris, comprehended as much faith to the Emperor, and his representative, the Acolyte or Follower, as was consistent with rendering justice to the injured Frank.

In furtherance of this plan, he conducted Count Robert from the subterranean vaults of the Blacquernal, of the intricacies of which he was master, having been repeatedly, of late, stationed sentinel there, for the purpose of acquiring that knowledge of which Tatius promised himself the advantage in the ensuing conspiracy. When they were in the open air, and at some distance from the gloomy towers of the Palace, he bluntly asked the Count of Paris whether he knew Agelastes the Philosopher. The other answered in the negative.

"Look you now, Sir Knight, you hurt yourself in attempting to impose upon me," said Hereward. "You must know him; for I saw you dined with him yesterday."

"O! with that learned old man?" said the Count. "I know nothing of him worth owning or disguising to thee or any one. A wily person he is, half herald and half minstrel."

"Half procurer and whole knave," subjoined the Varangian. "With the mask of apparent good-humour, he conceals his pandering to the vices of others; with the specious jargon of philosophy, he has argued himself out of religious belief and moral principle; and, with the appearance of the most devoted loyalty, he will, if he is not checked in time, either argue his too confiding master out of life and empire, or, if he fails in this, reason his simple associates into death and misery."

"And do you know all this," said Count Robert, "and permit this man to go unimpeached?"

"O, content you, sir," replied the Varangian; "I cannot yet form any plot which Agelastes may not countermine; but the time will come, nay, it is already approaching, when the Emperor's attention shall be irresistibly turned to the conduct of this man, and then let the philosopher sit fast, or by St Dunstan the barbarian overthrows him! I would only fain, methinks, save from his clutches a foolish friend, who has listened to his delusions."

"But what have I to do," said the Count, "with this man, or with his plots?"

"Much," said Hereward, "although you know it not. The main supporter of his plot is no other than the Cæsar, who ought to be the most faithful of men; but ever since Alexius has named a Sebasto-crator, an officer that is higher in rank, and nearer to the throne than the Cæsar himself, so long has Nicephorus Briennius been displeased and dissatisfied, though for what length of time he has joined the schemes of the astucious Agelastes, it is more difficult to say. This I know, that for many months he has fed liberally, as his riches enable him to do, the vices and prodigality of the Cæsar. He has encouraged him to show disrespect to his wife, although the Emperor's daughter; has put ill-will betwixt him and the royal family. And if Briennius bears no longer the fame of a rational man, and the renown of a good leader, he is deprived of both by following the advice of this artful sycophant."

"And what is all this to me?" said the Frank. "Agelastes may be a true man, or a time-serving slave; his master, Alexius Comnenus, is not so

much allied to me or mine, that I should meddle in the intrigues of his court?"

"You may be mistaken in that," said the blunt Varangian; "if these intrigues involve the happiness and virtue"——

"Death of a thousand martyrs!" said the Frank, "doth paltry intrigues and quarrels of slaves involve a single thought of suspicion of the noble Countess of Paris? The oaths of thy whole generation were ineffectual to prove but that one of her hairs had changed its colour to silver!"

"Well imagined, gallant knight," said the Anglo-Saxon; "thou art a husband fitted for this atmosphere of Constantinople, which calls for little vigilance and a strong belief. Thou wilt find many followers and fellows in this court of ours."

"Hark thee, friend," replied the Frank, "let us have no more words, nor walk farther together than just to the most solitary nook of this bewildered city, and let us there set to that work which we left even now unfinished."

"If thou wert a Duke, Sir Count," replied

the Varangian, "thou couldst not invite to a combat one who is more ready for it. Yet, consider the odds on which we fight. If I fall, my moan is soon made; but will my death set thy wife at liberty if she is under restraint, or restore her honour if it is tarnished?—Will it do any thing more than remove from the world the only person who is willing to give thee aid, at his own risk and danger, and who hopes to unite thee to thy wife, and replace thee at the head of thy forces?"

"I was wrong," said the Count of Paris; "I was entirely wrong; but beware, my good friend, how thou couplest the name of Brenhilda of Aspramonte with the word of dishonour, and tell me, instead of this irritating discourse, whither go we now?"

"To the Cytherean gardens of Agelastes, from which we are not far distant," said the Anglo-Saxon; "yet he hath a nearer way to it than that by which we now travel, else I should be at a loss to account for the short space in which he could exchange the charms of his garden for the gloomy ruins of the Temple of Isis, and the Imperial palace of the Blacquernal."

"And wherefore, and how long," said Count Robert, "dost thou conclude that my Countess is detained in these gardens?"

"Ever since yesterday," replied Hereward. "When both I, and several of my companions at my request, kept close watch upon the Cæsar and your lady, we did plainly perceive passages of fiery admiration on his part, and anger, as it seemed, on hers, which Agelastes, being Nicephorus's friend, was likely, as usual, to bring to an end, by a separation of you both from the army of the crusaders, that your wife, like many a matron before, might have the pleasure of taking up her residence in the gardens of that worthy sage; while you, my lord, might take up your own permanently in the castle of Blacquernal."

"Villain! why didst thou not apprise me of this yesterday?"

"A likely thing," said Hereward, "that I should feel myself at liberty to leave the ranks, and make such a communication to a man, whom, far from a friend, I then considered in the light of a personal enemy! Methinks, that instead of such language as this, you should be thankful

that so many chance circumstances have at length brought me to befriend and assist you."

Count Robert felt the truth of what was said, though at the same time his fiery temper longed to avenge itself, according to its wont, upon the party which was nearest at hand.

But now they had arrived at what the citizens of Constantinople called the Philosopher's Gardens. Here Hereward hoped to obtain entrance, for he had gained a knowledge of some part, at least, of the private signals of Achilles and Agelastes, since he had been introduced to the last at the ruins of the Temple of Isis. They had not indeed admitted him to their entire secret; yet, confident in his connexion with the Follower, they had no hesitation in communicating to him snatches of knowledge, such as, committed to a man of shrewd natural sense like the Anglo-Saxon, could scarce fail, in time and by degrees, to make him master of the whole. Count Robert and his companion stood before an arched door, the only opening in a high wall, and the Anglo-Saxon was about to knock, when, as if the idea had suddenly struck him,—

"What if the wretch Diogenes opens the gate? We must kill him, ere he can fly back and betray us. Well, it is a matter of necessity, and the villain has deserved his death by a hundred horrid crimes."

"Kill him, then, thyself," retorted Count Robert; "he is nearer thy degree, and assuredly I will not defile the name of Charlemagne with the blood of a black slave."

"Nay, God-a-mercy!" answered the Anglo-Saxon; "but you must bestir yourself in the action, supposing there come rescue, and that I be overborne by odds."

"Such odds," said the knight, "will render the action more like a *melée*, or general battle; and assure yourself, I will not be slack when I may, with my honour, be active."

"I doubt it not," said the Varangian; "but the distinction seems a strange one, that, before permitting a man to defend himself, or annoy his enemy, requires him to demand the pedigree of his ancestor.'

"Fear you not, sir," said Count Robert. "The strict rule of chivalry indeed bears what I tell

thee; but when the question is, Fight, or not? there is great allowance to be made for a decision in the affirmative."

"Let me give then the exorciser's rap," replied Hereward, "and see what fiend will appear."

So saying, he knocked in a particular manner, and the door opened inwards; a dwarfish negress stood in the gap—her white hair contrasted singularly with her dark complexion, and with the broad laughing look peculiar to these slaves. She had something in her physiognomy which, severely construed, might argue malice, and a delight in human misery.

"Is Agelastes——" said the Varangian; but he had not completed the sentence, when she answered him, by pointing down a shadowed walk.

The Anglo-Saxon and Frank turned in that direction, when the hag rather muttered, than said distinctly, "You are one of the initiated, Varangian; take heed whom you take with you, when you may hardly, peradventure, be welcomed even going alone."

Hereward made a sign that he understood her, and they were instantly out of her sight. The path winded beautifully through the shades of an eastern garden, where clumps of flowers and labyrinths of flowering shrubs, and the tall boughs of the forest trees, rendered even the breath of noon cool and acceptable.

"Here we must use our utmost caution," said Hereward, speaking in a low tone of voice; "for here it is most likely the deer that we seek has found its refuge. Better allow me to pass before, since you are too deeply agitated to possess the coolness necessary for a scout. Keep concealed beneath yon oak, and let no vain scruples of honour deter you from creeping beneath the underwood, or beneath the earth itself, if you should hear a footfall. If the lovers have agreed, Agelastes, it is probable, walks his round, to prevent intrusion."

"Death and furies! it cannot be," exclaimed the fiery Frank.—"Lady of the Broken Lances, take thy votary's life, ere thou torment him with this agony!"

He saw, however, the necessity of keeping a strong force upon himself, and permitted, without further remonstrance, the Varangian to pursue his way, looking, however, earnestly after him. By advancing forward a little, he could observe Hereward draw near to a pavilion which arose at no great distance from the place where they had parted. Here he observed him apply, first his eye, and then his ear, to one of the casements, which were in a great measure grown over, and excluded from the light, by various flowering shrubs. He almost thought he saw a grave interest take place in the countenance of the Varangian, and he longed to have his share of the information which he had doubtless obtained.

He crept, therefore, with noiseless steps, through the same labyrinth of foliage which had covered the approaches of Hereward; and so silent were his movements, that he touched the Anglo-Saxon, in order to make him aware of his presence, before he observed his approach.

Hereward, not aware at first by whom he was approached, turned on the intruder with a coun-

tenance like a burning coal. Seeing, however, that it was the Frank, he shrugged his shoulders, as if pitying the impatience which could not be kept under prudent restraint, and drawing himself back, allowed the Count the privilege of a peeping place through plinths of the casement, which could not be discerned by the sharpest eye from the inner side. The twilight character of the light which penetrated into this abode of pleasure, was suited to that species of thought to which a Temple of Cytherea was supposed to be dedicated. Portraits and groups of statuary were also to be seen, in the taste of those which they had beheld at the Kiosk of the waterfall, yet something more free in the ideas which they conveyed than were to be found at their first resting-place. Shortly after, the door of the pavilion opened, and the Countess entered, followed by her attendant Agatha. The lady threw herself on a couch as she came in, while her attendant, who was a young and very handsome woman, kept herself modestly in the background, so much so as hardly to be distinguished.

"What dost thou think," said the Countess,

"of so suspicious a friend as Agelastes? so gallant an enemy as this Cæsar, as he is called?"

"What should I think," returned the damsel, "except that what the old man calls friendship is hatred, and what the Cæsar terms a patriotic love for his country, which will not permit him to set its enemies at liberty, is in fact too strong an affection for his fair captive?"

"For such an affection," said the Countess, "he shall have the same requital as if it were indeed the hostility of which he would give it the colour.—My true and noble lord! hadst thou an idea of the calamities to which they have subjected me, how soon wouldst thou break through every restraint to hasten to my relief!"

"Art thou a man," said Count Robert to his companion; "and canst thou advise me to remain still and hear this?"

"I am one man," said the Anglo-Saxon; "you, sir, are another; but all our arithmetic will not make us more than two; and in this place, it is probable that a whistle from the Cæsar, or a scream from Agelastes, would bring a thousand to match us, if we were as bold as Bevis of

Hampton.—Stand still and keep quiet. I counsel this, less as respecting my own life, which, by embarking upon a wild-goose chase with so strange a partner, I have shown I put at little value, than for thy safety, and that of the lady thy Countess, who shows herself as virtuous as beautiful."

"I was imposed on at first," said the Lady Brenhilda to her attendant. "Affectation of severe morals, of deep learning, and of rigid rectitude, assumed by this wicked old man, made me believe in part the character which he pretended; but the gloss is rubbed off since he let me see into his alliance with the unworthy Cæsar, and the ugly picture remains in its native loathsomeness. Nevertheless, if I can, by address or subtlety, deceive this arch-deceiver,—as he has taken from me, in a great measure, every other kind of assistance,—I will not refuse that of craft, which he may find perhaps equal to his own?"

"Hear you that?" said the Varangian to the Count of Paris. "Do not let your impatience mar the web of your lady's prudence. I will weigh a woman's wit against a man's valour,

where there is aught to do! Let us not come in with our assistance until time shall show us that it is necessary for her safety and our success."

"Amen," said the Count of Paris; "but hope not, Sir Saxon, that thy prudence shall persuade me to leave this garden without taking full vengeance on that unworthy Cæsar, and the pretended philosopher, if indeed he turns out to have assumed a character"——The Count was here beginning to raise his voice, when the Saxon, without ceremony, placed his hand on his mouth. "Thou takest a liberty," said Count Robert, lowering however his tones.

"Ay, truly," said Hereward; "when the house is on fire, I do not stop to ask whether the water which I pour on it be perfumed or no."

This recalled the Frank to a sense of his situation; and if not contented with the Saxon's mode of making an apology, he was at least silenced. A distant noise was now heard—the Countess listened, and changed colour. "Agatha," she said, "we are like champions in the lists, and here comes the adversary. Let us retreat

into this side apartment, and so for a while put off an encounter thus alarming." So saying, the two females withdrew into the sort of anteroom, which opened from the principal apartment behind the seat which Brenhilda had occupied.

They had scarcely disappeared, when, as the stage direction has it, enter from the other side the Cæsar and Agelastes. They had perhaps heard the last words of Brenhilda, for the Cæsar repeated in a low tone—

"Militat omnis amans, habet et sua castra Cupido.

"What, has our fair opponent withdrawn her forces? No matter, it shows she thinks of the warfare, though the enemy be not in sight. Well, thou shalt not have to upbraid me this time, Agelastes, with precipitating my amours, and depriving myself of the pleasure of pursuit. By Heavens, I will be as regular in my progress as if in reality I bore on my shoulders the whole load of years which make the difference between us; for I shrewdly suspect that with

thee, old man, it is that envious churl Time that hath plucked the wings of Cupid."

"Say not so, mighty Cæsar," said the old man; "it is the hand of Prudence, which, depriving Cupid's wing of some wild feathers, leaves him still enough to fly with an equal and steady flight."

"Thy flight, however, was less measured, Agelastes, when thou didst collect that armoury —that magazine of Cupid's panoply, out of which thy kindness permitted me but now to arm myself, or rather to repair my accoutrements."

So saying, he glanced his eye over his own person, blazing with gems, and adorned with a chain of gold, bracelets, rings, and other ornaments, which, with a new and splendid habit, assumed since his arrival at these Cytherean gardens, tended to set off his very handsome figure.

"I am glad," said Agelastes, "if you have found among toys, which I now never wear, and seldom made use of even when life was young with me, any thing which may set off your natural advantages. Remember only this slight condition, that such of these trifles as have made

part of your wearing apparel on this distinguished day, cannot return to a meaner owner, but must of necessity remain the property of that greatness of which they had once formed an ornament."

"I cannot consent to this, my worthy friend," said the Cæsar; "I know thou valuest these jewels only in so far as a philosopher may value them; that is, for nothing save the remembrances which attach to them. This large seal-ring, for instance, was—I have heard you say—the property of Socrates; if so, you cannot view it save with devout thankfulness, that your own philosophy has never been tried with the exercise of a Xantippe. These clasps released, in older times, the lovely bosom of Phryne; and they now belong to one who could do better homage to the beauties they concealed or discovered than could the cynic Diogenes. These buckles, too"——

"I will spare thy ingenuity, good youth," said Agelastes, somewhat nettled; "or rather, noble Cæsar. Keep thy wit—thou wilt have ample occasion for it."

"Fear not me," said the Cæsar. "Let us

proceed, since you will, to exercise the gifts which we possess, such as they are, either natural or bequeathed to us by our dear and respected friend. Hah!" he said, the door opening suddenly, and the Countess almost meeting him, "our wishes are here anticipated."

He bowed accordingly with the deepest deference to the Lady Brenhilda, who, having made some alterations to enhance the splendour of her attire, now moved forward from the withdrawing-room into which she had retreated.

"Hail, noble lady," said the Cæsar, "whom I have visited with the intention of apologising for detaining you, in some degree against your will, in those strange regions in which you unexpectedly find yourself."

"Not in some degree," answered the lady, "but entirely contrary to my inclinations, which are, to be with my husband the Count of Paris, and the followers who have taken the cross under his banner."

"Such, doubtless, were your thoughts when you left the land of the west," said Agelastes; "but, fair Countess, have they experienced no

change? You have left a shore streaming with human blood when the slightest provocation occurred, and thou hast come to one whose principal maxim is to increase the sum of human happiness by every mode which can be invented. In the west yonder, he or she is respected most who can best exercise their tyrannical strength in making others miserable, while in these more placid realms, we reserve our garlands for the ingenious youth, or lovely lady, who can best make happy the person whose affection is fixed upon her."

"But, reverend philosopher," said the Countess, "who labourest so artificially in recommending the yoke of pleasure, know that you contradict every notion which I have been taught from my infancy. In the land where my nurture lay, so far are we from acknowledging your doctrines, that we match not, except like the lion and the lioness, when the male has compelled the female to acknowledge his superior worth and valour. Such is our rule, that a damsel, even of mean degree, would think herself hei-

nously undermatched, if wedded to a gallant whose fame in arms was yet unknown."

"But, noble lady," said the Cæsar, "a dying man may then find room for some faint hope; were there but a chance that distinction in arms could gain those affections which have been stolen, rather than fairly conferred, how many are there who would willingly enter into the competition where the prize is so fair! What is the enterprise too bold to be undertaken on such a condition! And where is the individual whose heart would not feel, that in baring his sword for the prize, he made vow never to return it to the scabbard without the proud boast, What I have not yet won, I have deserved!"

"You see, lady," said Agelastes, who apprehending that the last speech of the Cæsar had made some impression, hastened to follow it up with a suitable observation—"You see that the fire of chivalry burns as gallantly in the bosom of the Grecians as in that of the western nations."

"Yes," answered Brenhilda, "and I have heard of the celebrated siege of Troy, on which occasion a dastardly coward carried off the wife

of a brave man, shunned every proffer of encounter with the husband whom he had wronged, and finally caused the death of his numerous brothers, the destruction of his native city, with all the wealth which it contained, and died himself the death of a pitiful poltroon, lamented only by his worthless leman, to show how well the rules of chivalry were understood by your predecessors."

"Lady, you mistake," said the Cæsar; "the offences of Paris were those of a dissolute Asiatic; the courage which avenged them was that of the Greek Empire."

"You are learned, sir," said the lady; "but think not that I will trust your words until you produce before me a Grecian knight, gallant enough to look upon the armed crest of my husband without quaking."

"That, methinks, were not extremely difficult," returned the Cæsar; "if they have not flattered me, I have myself been thought equal in battle to more dangerous men than him who has been strangely mated with the Lady Brenhilda."

"That is soon tried," answered the Countess. "You will hardly, I think, deny, that my husband, separated from me by some unworthy trick, is still at thy command, and could be produced at thy pleasure. I will ask no armour for him save what he wears, no weapon but his good sword Tranchefer; then place him in this chamber, or any other lists equally narrow, and if he flinch, or cry craven, or remain dead under shield, let Brenhilda be the prize of the conqueror.—Merciful Heaven!" she concluded, as she sank back upon her seat, "forgive me for the crime of even imagining such a termination, which is equal almost to doubting thine unerring judgment!"

"Let me, however," said the Cæsar, "catch up these precious words before they fall to the ground.—Let me hope that he, to whom the heavens shall give power and strength to conquer this highly-esteemed Count of Paris, shall succeed him in the affections of Brenhilda; and believe me, the sun plunges not through the sky to his resting-place, with the same celerity that I shall hasten to the encounter."

"Now, by Heaven!" said Count Robert, in

an anxious whisper to Hereward, "it is too much to expect me to stand by and hear a contemptible Greek, who durst not stand even the rattling farewell which Tranchefer takes of his scabbard, brave me in my absence, and affect to make love to my lady *par amours!* And she, too—methinks Brenhilda allows more license than she is wont to do to yonder chattering popinjay. By the rood! I will spring into the apartment, front them with my personal appearance, and confute yonder braggart in a manner he is like to remember."

"Under favour," said the Varangian, who was the only auditor of this violent speech, "you shall be ruled by calm reason while I am with you. When we are separated, let the devil of knight errantry, which has such possession of thee, take thee upon his shoulders, and carry thee full tilt wheresoever he lists."

"Thou art a brute," said the Count, looking at him with a contempt corresponding to the expression he made use of; "not only without humanity, but without the sense of natural honour or natural shame. The most despicable of

animals stands not by tamely and sees another assail his mate. The bull offers his horns to a rival—the mastiff uses his jaws—and even the timid stag becomes furious, and gores."

"Because they are beasts," said the Varangian, "and their mistresses also creatures without shame or reason, who are not aware of the sanctity of a choice. But thou, too, Count, canst thou not see the obvious purpose of this poor lady, forsaken by all the world, to keep her faith towards thee, by eluding the snares with which wicked men have beset her? By the souls of my fathers! my heart is so much moved by her ingenuity, mingled as I see it is with the most perfect candour and faith, that I myself, in fault of a better champion, would willingly raise the axe in her behalf!"

"I thank thee, my good friend," said the Count; "I thank thee as heartily as if it were possible thou shouldst be left to do that good office for Brenhilda, the beloved of many a noble lord, the mistress of many a powerful vassal; and, what is more, much more than thanks, I

crave thy pardon for the wrong I did thee but now."

"My pardon you cannot need," said the Varangian; "for I take no offence that is not seriously meant.—Stay, they speak again."

"It is strange it should be so," said the Cæsar, as he paced the apartment; "but methinks, nay, I am almost certain, Agelastes, that I hear voices in the vicinity of this apartment of thy privacy."

"It is impossible," said Agelastes; "but I will go and see."

Perceiving him to leave the pavilion, the Varangian made the Frank sensible that they must crouch down among a little thicket of evergreens, where they lay completely obscured. The philosopher made his rounds with a heavy step, but a watchful eye; and the two listeners were obliged to observe the strictest silence, without motion of any kind, until he had completed an ineffectual search, and returned into the pavilion.

"By my faith, brave man," said the Count, "ere we return to our skulking-place, I must

tell thee in thine ear, that never, in my life, was temptation so strong upon me, as that which prompted me to beat out that old hypocrite's brains, provided I could have reconciled it with my honour; and heartily do I wish that thou, whose honour no way withheld thee, had experienced and given way to some impulse of a similar nature."

"Such fancies have passed through my head," said the Varangian; "but I will not follow them till they are consistent both with our own safety, and more particularly with that of the Countess."

"I thank thee again for thy good-will to her," said Count Robert; "and, by Heaven! if fight we must at length, as it seems likely, I will neither grudge thee an honourable antagonist, nor fair quarter if the combat goes against thee."

"Thou hast my thanks," was the reply of Hereward; "only, for Heaven's sake, be silent in this conjuncture, and do what thou wilt afterwards."

Before the Varangian and the Count had again

resumed their posture of listeners, the parties within the pavilion, conceiving themselves unwatched, had resumed their conversation, speaking low, yet with considerable animation:

"It is in vain you would persuade me," said the Countess, "that you know not where my husband is, or that you have not the most absolute influence over his captivity. Who else could have an interest in banishing or putting to death the husband, but he that affects to admire the wife?"

"You do me wrong, beautiful lady," answered the Cæsar, "and forget that I can in no shape be termed the moving-spring of this empire; that my father-in-law, Alexius, is the Emperor; and that the woman who terms herself my wife, is jealous as a fiend can be of my slightest motion.—What possibility was there that I should work the captivity of your husband and your own? The open affront which the Count of Paris put upon the Emperor, was one which he was likely to avenge, either by secret guile or by open force. Me it no way touched, save as the humble vassal of thy charms; and it was by

the wisdom and the art of the sage Agelastes, that I was able to extricate thee from the gulf in which thou hadst else certainly perished. Nay, weep not, lady, for as yet we know not the fate of Count Robert; but, credit me, it is wisdom to choose a better protector, and consider him as no more."

"A better than him," said Brenhilda, "I can never have, were I to choose out of the knighthood of all the world!"

"This hand," said the Cæsar, drawing himself into a martial attitude, "should decide that question, were the man of whom thou thinkest so much yet moving on the face of this earth, and at liberty."

"Thou art," said Brenhilda, looking fixedly at him with the fire of indignation flashing from every feature; "thou art—but it avails not telling thee what is thy real name: believe me, the world shall one day ring with it, and be justly sensible of its value. Observe what I am about to say—Robert of Paris is gone—or captive, I know not where. He cannot fight the match of which thou seemest so desirous—but here stands

Brenhilda, born heiress of Aspramonte, by marriage the wedded wife of the good Count of Paris. She was never matched in the lists by mortal man, except the valiant Count, and since thou art so grieved that thou canst not meet her husband in battle, thou canst not surely object, if she is willing to meet thee in his stead?"

"How, madam?" said the Cæsar, astonished; "do you propose yourself to hold the lists against me?"

"Against you!" said the Countess; "against all the Grecian empire, if they shall affirm that Robert of Paris is justly used and lawfully confined."

"And are the conditions," said the Cæsar, "the same as if Count Robert himself held the lists? The vanquished must then be at the pleasure of the conqueror for good or evil."

"It would seem so," said the Countess, "nor do I refuse the hazard; only, that if the other champion shall bite the dust, the noble Count Robert shall be set at liberty, and permitted to depart with all suitable honours."

"This I refuse not," said the Cæsar, "provided it is in my power."

A deep growling sound, like that of a modern gong, here interrupted the conference.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Varangian and Count Robert, at every risk of discovery, had remained so near as fully to conjecture, though they could not expressly overhear, the purport of the conversation.

"He has accepted her challenge?" said the Count of Paris.

"And with apparent willingness," said Hereward.

"O, doubtless, doubtless—" answered the Crusader; "but he knows not the skill in war which a woman may attain; for my part, God knows I have enough depending upon the issue of this contest, yet such is my confidence, that I would to God I had more. I vow to our Lady of the Broken Lances, that I desire every furrow of land I possess—every honour which I can call

my own, from the Countship of Paris, down to the leather that binds my spur, were dependent and at issue upon this fair field, between your Cæsar, as men term him, and Brenhilda of Aspramonte."

"It is a noble confidence," said the Varangian, "nor durst I say it is a rash one; only I cannot but remember that the Cæsar is a strong man as well as a handsome, expert in the use of arms, and, above all, less strictly bound than you esteem yourself by the rules of honour. There are many ways in which advantage may be given and taken, which will not, in the Cæsar's estimation, alter the character of the field from an equal one, although it might do so in the opinion of the chivalrous Count of Paris, or even in that of the poor Varangian. But first let me conduct you to some place of safety, for your escape must be soon, if it is not already detected. The sounds which we heard intimate that some of his confederate plotters have visited the garden on other than love affairs. I will guide thee to another avenue than that by which we entered. But

you would hardly, I suppose, be pleased to adopt the wisest alternative ?"

"And what may that be ?" said the Count.

"To give thy purse, though it were thine all, to some poor ferryman to waft thee over the Hellespont, then hasten to carry thy complaint to Godfrey of Bouillon, and what friends thou mayst have among thy brethren crusaders, and determine, as thou easily canst, on a sufficient number of them to come back and menace the city with instant war, unless the Emperor should deliver up thy lady, most unfairly made prisoner, and prevent, by his authority, this absurd and unnatural combat."

"And would you have me then," said Count Robert, "move the crusaders to break a fairly appointed field of battle ? Do you think that Godfrey of Bouillon would turn back upon his pilgrimage for such an unworthy purpose ; or that the Countess of Paris would accept as a service, means of safety which would stain her honour for ever, by breaking an appointment solemnly made on her own challenge ?—Never !"

"My judgment is then at fault," said the

Varangian, "for I see I can hammer out no expedient which is not, in some extravagant manner or another, controlled by your foolish notions. Here is a man who has been trapped into the power of his enemy by the basest stratagem upon his lady; upon whom also a similar stratagem has been practised, involving both her life and honour, yet he thinks it a matter of necessity that he keeps faith as precisely with these midnight poisoners, as he would had it been pledged to the most honourable men!"

"Thou say'st a painful truth," said Count Robert; "but my word is the emblem of my faith; and if I pass it to a dishonourable or faithless foe, it is imprudently done on my part: but if I break it, being once pledged, it is a dishonourable action, and the disgrace can never be washed from my shield."

"Do you mean, then," said the Varangian, "to suffer your wife's honour to remain pledged as it at present is, on the event of an unequal combat?"

"God and the saints pardon thee such a thought!" said the Count of Paris. "I will go

to see this combat with a heart as firm, if not as light, as any time I ever saw spears splintered. If by the influence of any accident or treachery, (for fairly, and with such an antagonist, Brenhilda of Aspramonte cannot be overthrown,) I step into the lists, proclaim the Cæsar as he is—a villain—show the falsehood of his conduct from beginning to end, appeal to every noble heart that hears me, and then—God show the right!"

Hereward paused, and shook his head. "All this," he said, "might be feasible enough, provided the combat were to be fought in the presence of your own countrymen, or even, by the mass! if the Varangians were to be guards of the lists. But treachery of every kind is so familiar to the Greeks, that I question if they would view the conduct of their Cæsar as any thing else than a pardonable and natural stratagem of Dan Cupid, to be smiled at, rather than subjected to disgrace or punishment."

"A nation," said Count Robert, "who could smile at such a jest, may Heaven refuse them sympathy at their utmost need, when their sword is broken in their hand, and their wives

and daughters shrieking in the relentless grasp of a barbarous enemy!"

Hereward looked upon his companion, whose flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes bore witness to his enthusiasm.

"I see," he said, "you are resolved, and I know that your resolution can in justice be called by no other name than an act of heroic folly —What then? it is long since life has been bitter to the Varangian exile. Morn has raised him from a joyless bed, which night has seen him lie down upon, wearied with wielding a mercenary weapon in the wars of strangers. He has longed to lay down his life in an honourable cause, and this is one in which the extremity and very essence of honour is implicated. It tallies also with my scheme of saving the Emperor, which will be greatly facilitated by the downfall of his ungrateful son-in-law." Then addressing himself to the Count, he continued, "Well, Sir Count, as thou art the person principally concerned, I am willing to yield to thy reasoning in this affair; but I hope you will permit me to mingle with your resolution some advices of a

more every-day and less fantastic nature. For example, thy escape from the dungeons of the Blacquernal must soon be generally known. In prudence, indeed, I myself must be the first to communicate it, since otherwise the suspicion will fall on me—Where do you think of concealing yourself? for assuredly the search will be close and general."

"For that," said the Count of Paris, "I must be indebted to thy suggestion, with thanks for every lie which thou findest thyself obliged to make, to contrive, and produce in my behalf, entreating thee only to render them as few as possible, they being a coin which I myself never fabricate."

"Sir Knight," answered Hereward, "let me begin first by saying, that no knight that ever belted sword is more a slave to truth, when truth is observed towards him, than the poor soldier who talks to thee; but when the game depends not upon fair play, but upon lulling men's cautiousness asleep by falsehood, and drugging their senses by opiate draughts, they who would scruple at no means of deceiving me, can hardly

expect that I, who am paid in such base money, should pass nothing on my part but what is lawful and genuine. For the present thou must remain concealed within my poor apartment, in the barracks of the Varangians, which is the last place where they will think of seeking for thee. Take this, my upper cloak, and follow me; and now that we are about to leave these gardens, thou mayest follow me unsuspected as a sentinel attending his officer; for, take it along with you, noble Count, that we Varangians are a sort of persons upon whom the Greeks care not to look very long or fixedly."

They now reached the gate where they had been admitted by the negress, and Hereward, who was intrusted with the power, it seems, of letting himself out of the philosopher's premises, though not of entering without assistance from the portress, took out a key which turned the lock on the garden side, so that they soon found themselves at liberty. They then proceeded by by-paths through the city, Hereward leading the way, and the Count following, without speech

or remonstrance, until they stood before the portal of the barracks of the Varangians.

"Make haste," said the sentinel who was on duty, "dinner is already begun." The communication sounded joyfully in the ears of Hereward, who was much afraid that his companion might have been stopt and examined. By a side passage he reached his own quarters, and introduced the Count into a small room, the sleeping chamber of his squire, where he apologized for leaving him for some time; and, going out, locked the door, for fear, as he said, of intrusion.

The demon of suspicion was not very likely to molest a mind so frankly constituted as that of Count Robert, and yet the last action of Hereward did not fail to occasion some painful reflections.

"This man," he said, "had needs be true, for I have reposed in him a mighty trust, which few hirelings in his situation would honourably discharge. What is to prevent him to report to the principal officer of his watch, that the Frank prisoner, Robert Count of Paris, whose wife stands engaged for so desperate a combat with

the Cæsar, has escaped, indeed, this morning, from the prisons of the Blacquernal, but has suffered himself to be trepanned at noon, and is again a captive in the barracks of the Varangian Guard?—what means of defence are mine, were I discovered to these mercenaries?—What man could do, by the favour of our Lady of the Broken Lances, I have not failed to achieve. I have slain a tiger in single combat—I have killed one warder, and conquered the desperate and gigantic creature by whom he was supported. I have had terms enough at command to bring over this Varangian to my side, in appearance at least; yet all this does not encourage me to hope that I could long keep at bay ten or a dozen such men as these beef-fed knaves appear to be, led in upon me by a fellow of thews and sinews such as those of my late companion.—Yet, for shame, Robert! such thoughts are unworthy a descendant of Charlemagne. When wert thou wont so curiously to count thine enemies, and when wert thou wont to be suspicious, since he, whose bosom may truly boast itself incapable of fraud, ought in

honesty to be the last to expect it in another? The Varangian's look is open, his coolness in danger is striking, his speech is more frank and ready than ever was that of a traitor. If he is false, there is no faith in the hand of nature, for truth, sincerity, and courage are written upon his forehead."

While Count Robert was thus reflecting upon his condition, and combating the thick-coming doubts and suspicions which its uncertainties gave rise to, he began to be sensible that he had not eaten for many hours; and amidst many doubts and fears of a more heroic nature, he half entertained a lurking suspicion, that they meant to let hunger undermine his strength before they adventured into the apartment to deal with him.

We shall best see how far these doubts were deserved by Hereward, or how far they were unjust, by following his course after he left his barrack-room. Snatching a morsel of dinner, which he eat with an affectation of great hunger, but, in fact, that his attention to his food might be a pretence for dispensing with disagreeable

questions, or with conversation of any kind, he pleaded duty, and immediately leaving his comrades, directed his course to the lodgings of Achilles Tatius, which were a part of the same building. A Syrian slave, who opened the door, after a deep reverence to Hereward, whom he knew as a favourite attendant of the Acolyte, said to him that his master was gone forth, but had desired him to say, that if he wished to see him, he would find him at the Philosopher's Gardens, so called, as belonging to the sage Agelastes.

Hereward turned about instantly, and availing himself of his knowledge of Constantinople to thread its streets in the shortest time possible, at length stood alone before the door in the garden-wall, at which he and the Count of Paris had previously been admitted in the earlier part of the day. The same negress appeared at the same private signal, and when he asked for Achilles Tatius, she replied, with some sharpness, " Since you were here this morning, I marvel you did not meet him, or that, having business with him, you did not stay till he

arrived. Sure I am, that not long after you entered the garden the Acolyte was enquiring for you."

"It skills not, old woman," said the Varangian; "I communicate the reason of my motions to my commander, but not to thee." He entered the garden accordingly, and, avoiding the twilight-path that led to the Bower of Love,—so was the pavilion named in which he had overheard the dialogue between the Cæsar and the Countess of Paris,—he arrived before a simple garden-house, whose humble and modest front seemed to announce that it was the abode of philosophy and learning. Here, passing before the windows, he made some little noise, expecting to attract the attention either of Achilles Tatius, or his accomplice Agelastes, as chance should determine. It was the first who heard, and who replied. The door opened; a lofty plume stooped itself, that its owner might cross the threshold, and the stately form of Achilles Tatius entered the gardens. "What now," he said, "our trusty sentinel? what hast thou, at this time of day, come to report to us? Thou art our good

friend, and highly-esteemed soldier, and well we wot thine errand must be of importance, since thou hast brought it thyself, and at an hour so unusual."

"Pray Heaven," said Hereward, "that the news I have brought deserve a welcome."

"Speak them instantly," said the Acolyte, "good or bad; thou speakest to a man to whom fear is unknown." But his eye, which quailed as he looked on the soldier—his colour, which went and came—his hands, which busied themselves in an uncertain manner in adjusting the belt of his sword,—all argued a state of mind very different from that which his tone of defiance would fain have implied. "Courage," he said, "my trusty soldier! speak the news to me. I can bear the worst thou hast to tell."

"In a word, then," said the Varangian, "your Valour directed me this morning to play the office of master of the rounds upon those dungeons of the Blacquernal palace, in which are imprisoned the blind old traitor Ursel, and where last night the boisterous Count Robert of Paris was also incarcerated."

"I remember well," said Achilles Tatius. —"What then?"

"As I reposed me," said Hereward, "in an apartment above the vaults, I heard cries from beneath, of a kind which attracted my attention. I hastened to examine, and my surprise was extreme, when, looking down into the dungeon, though I could see nothing distinctly, yet, by the wailing and whimpering sounds, I conceived that the Man of the Forest, the animal called Sylvan, whom our soldiers have so far indoctrinated in our Saxon tongue as to make him useful in the wards of the prison, was bemoaning himself on account of some violent injury. Descending with a torch, I found the bed on which the prisoner had been let down burnt to cinders; the tiger which had been chained within a spring of it, with its skull broken to pieces; the creature called Sylvan, prostrate and writhing under great pain and terror, and no prisoner whatever in the dungeon. There were marks that all the fastenings had been withdrawn by a Mytilenian soldier, companion of my watch, when he visited the dungeon at the usual hour; and as, in my anxious search,

I at length found his dead body, slain apparently by a stab in the throat, I was obliged to believe that while I was examining the cell, he, this Count Robert, with whose daring life the adventure is well consistent, had escaped to the upper air, by means, doubtless, of the ladder and trap-door by which I had descended."

"And wherefore didst thou not instantly call treason, and raise the hue and cry?" demanded the Acolyte.

"I dared not venture to do so," replied the Varangian, "till I had instructions from your Valour. The alarming cry of treason, and the various rumours likely at this moment to ensue, might have involved a search so close, as perchance would have discovered matters in which the Acolyte himself would have been rendered subject to suspicion."

"Thou art right," said Achilles Tatius, in a whisper; "and yet it will be necessary that we do not pretend any longer to conceal the flight of this important prisoner, if we would not pass for being his accomplices. Where thinkest thou this unhappy fugitive can have taken refuge?"

"That I was in hopes of learning from your Valour's greater wisdom," said Hereward.

"Thinkest thou not," said Achilles, "that he may have crossed the Hellespont, in order to rejoin his own countrymen and adherents?"

"It is much to be dreaded," said Hereward. "Undoubtedly, if the Count listened to the advice of any one who knew the face of the country, such would be the very counsel he would receive."

"The danger, then, of his return, at the head of a vengeful body of Franks," said the Acolyte, "is not so immediate as I apprehended at first, for the Emperor gave positive orders that the boats and galleys which yesterday transported the crusaders to the shores of Asia should re-cross the strait, and bring back no single one of them from the step upon their journey on which he had so far furthered them.—Besides, they all,—their leaders, that is to say,—made their vows before crossing, that they would not turn back so much as a foot's pace, now that they had set actually forth on the road to Palestine."

"So therefore," said Hereward, "one of two

propositions is unquestionable; either Count Robert is on the eastern side of the strait, having no means of returning with his brethren to avenge the usage he has received, and may therefore be securely set at defiance,—or else he lurks somewhere in Constantinople, without a friend or ally to take his part, or encourage him openly to state his supposed wrongs;—in either case, there can, I think, be no tact in conveying to the palace the news that he has freed himself, since it would only alarm the Court, and afford the Emperor ground for many supicions.—But it is not for an ignorant barbarian like me to prescribe a course of conduct to your valour and wisdom, and methinks the sage Agelastes were a fitter counsellor than such as I am."

"No, no, no," said the Acolyte, in a hurried whisper; "the philosopher and I are right good friends, sworn good friends, very especially bound together; but should it come to this, that one of us must needs throw before the footstool of the Emperor the head of the other, I think thou wouldst not advise that I, whose hairs have not a trace of silver, should be the last in making the

offering; wherefore, we will say nothing of this mishap, but give thee full power and the highest charge to seek for Count Robert of Paris, be he dead or alive, to secure him within the dungeons set apart for the discipline of our own corps, and when thou hast done so, to bring me notice. I may make him my friend in many ways, by extricating his wife from danger by the axes of my Varangians. What is there in this metropolis that they have to oppose them?"

"When raised in a just cause," answered Hereward, "nothing."

"Hah!—sayest thou?" said the Acolyte; "how meanest thou by that?—but I know—Thou art scrupulous about having the just and lawful command of thy officer in every action in which thou art engaged, and, thinking in that dutiful and soldierlike manner, it is my duty as thine Acolyte to see thy scruples satisfied. A warrant shalt thou have, with full powers, to seek for and imprison this foreign Count of whom we have been speaking—And, hark thee, my excellent friend," said the Acolyte, with some hesitation, "I think thou hadst better begone, and

begin, or rather continue thy search. It is unnecessary to inform our friend Agelastes of what has happened, until his advice be more needful than as yet it is on the occasion. Home—home to the barracks; I will account to him for thy appearance here, if he be curious on the subject, which, as a suspicious old man, he is likely to be. Go to the barracks, and act as if thou hadst a warrant in every respect full and ample. I will provide thee with one when I come back to my quarters."

The Varangian turned hastily homewards.

"Now, is it not," he said, "a strange thing, and enough to make a man a rogue for life—to observe how the devil encourages young beginners in falsehood! I have told a greater lie—at least I have suppressed more truth—than on any occasion before in my whole life—and what is the consequence? Why, my commander throws almost at my head a warrant sufficient to guarantee and protect me in all I have done, or propose to do! If the foul fiend were thus regular in protecting his votaries, methinks they would have little reason to complain of him, or better men

to be astonished at their number. But a time comes, they say, when he seldom fails to desert them. Therefore, get thee behind me, Satan! If I have seemed to be thy servant for a short time, it is but with an honest and Christian purpose."

As he entertained these thoughts, he looked back upon the path, and was startled at an apparition of a creature of a much greater size, and a stranger shape than human, covered, all but the face, with a reddish-dun fur; his expression an ugly, and yet a sad melancholy; a cloth was wrapt round one hand, and an air of pain and languor, bespoke suffering from a wound. So much was Hereward pre-occupied with his own reflections, that at first he thought his imagination had actually raised the devil; but after a sudden start of surprise, he recognized his acquaintance Sylvan. "Hah! old friend," he said, "I am happy thou hast made thy escape to a place where thou wilt find plenty of fruit to support thee. Take my advice—keep out of the way of discovery—Keep thy friend's counsel."

The Man of the Wood uttered a chattering noise in return to this address.

"I understand thee," said Hereward, "thou wilt tell no tales, thou sayest; and faith I will trust thee rather than the better part of my own two-legged race, who are eternally circumventing or murdering each other."

A minute after the creature was out of sight, Hereward heard the shriek of a female, and a voice which cried for help. The accents must have been uncommonly interesting to the Varangian, since, forgetting his own dangerous situation, he immediately turned and flew to the suppliant's assistance.

CHAPTER IX.

She comes! she comes! in all the charms of youth,
Unequall'd love, and unsuspected truth!

HEREWARD was not long in tracing the cry through the wooded walks, when a female rushed into his arms; alarmed, as it appeared, by Sylvan, who was pursuing her closely. The figure of Hereward, with his axe uplifted, put an instant stop to his career, and with a terrified note of his native cries, he withdrew into the thickest of the adjoining foliage.

Relieved from his presence, Hereward had time to look at the female whom he had succoured: She was arrayed in a dress which consisted of several colours, that which predominated being a pale yellow; her tunic was of this colour, and, like a modern gown, was closely fitted to the body, which, in the present case, was that of a

tall, but very well-formed person. The mantle, or upper garment, in which the whole figure was wrapped, was of fine cloth; and the kind of hood which was attached to it having flown back with the rapidity of her motion, gave to view the hair, beautifully adorned and twisted into a natural head-dress. Beneath this natural head-gear appeared a face pale as death, from a sense of the supposed danger, but which preserved, even amidst its terror, an exquisite degree of beauty.

Hereward was thunderstruck at this apparition. The dress was neither Grecian, Italian, nor of the costume of the Franks;—it was *Saxon!*—connected by a thousand tender remembrances with Hereward's childhood and youth. The circumstance was most extraordinary. Saxon women, indeed, there were in Constantinople, who had united their fortunes with those of the Varangians; and those often chose to wear their national dress in the city, because the character and conduct of their husbands secured them a degree of respect, which they might not have met with either as Grecian

or as stranger females of a similar rank. But almost all these were personally known to Hereward. It was no time, however, for reverie—he was himself in danger—the situation of the young female might be no safe one. In every case, it was judicious to quit the more public part of the gardens; he therefore lost not a moment in conveying the fainting Saxon to a retreat he fortunately was acquainted with. A covered path, obscured by vegetation, led through a species of labyrinth to an artificial cave, at the bottom of which, half-paved with shells, moss, and spar, lay the gigantic and half-recumbent statue of a river deity, with its usual attributes—that is, its front crowned with water-lilies and sedges, and its ample hand half-resting upon an empty urn. The attitude of the whole figure corresponded with the motto,—"I SLEEP—AWAKE ME NOT."

"Accursed relic of paganism," said Hereward, who was, in proportion to his light, a zealous Christian—"brutish stock or stone that thou art! I will wake thee with a vengeance." So saying, he struck the head of the slumbering deity with his battle-axe, and deranged the play

of the fountain so much that the water began to pour into the basin.

"Thou art a good block nevertheless—" said the Varangian, "to send succour so needful to the aid of my poor countrywoman. Thou shalt give her also, with thy leave, a portion of thy couch." So saying, he arranged his fair burden, who was as yet insensible, upon the pedestal where the figure of the River God reclined. In doing this, his attention was recalled to her face, and again and again he was thrilled with an emotion of hope, but so excessively like fear, that it could only be compared to the flickering of a torch, uncertain whether it is to light up or be instantly extinguished. With a sort of mechanical attention, he continued to make such efforts as he could to recall the intellect of the beautiful creature before him. His feelings were those of the astronomical sage, to whom the rise of the moon slowly restores the contemplation of that heaven, which is at once, as a Christian, his hope of felicity, and, as a philosopher, the source of his knowledge. The blood returned to her cheek, and reanimation, and even recol-

lection, took place in her earlier than in the astonished Varangian.

"Blessed Mary!" she said, "have I indeed tasted the last bitter cup, and is it here where thou reunitest thy votaries after death!—Speak, Hereward! if thou art aught but an empty creature of the imagination!—speak, and tell me, if I have but dreamed of that monstrous ogre?"

"Collect thyself, my beloved Bertha," said the Anglo-Saxon, recalled by the sound of her voice, "and prepare to endure what thou livest to witness, and thy Hereward survives to tell. That hideous thing exists—nay, do not start, and look for a hiding-place—thy own gentle hand with a riding rod is sufficient to tame its courage. And am I not here, Bertha? Wouldst thou wish another safeguard?"

"No—no,"—exclaimed she, seizing on the arm of her recovered lover. "Do I not know you now?"

"And is it but now you know me, Bertha?" said Hereward.

"I suspected before," she said, casting down her eyes; "but I know with certainty that mark of the boar's tusk."

Hereward suffered her imagination to clear itself from the shock it had received so suddenly, before he ventured to enter upon present events, in which there was so much both to doubt and to fear. He permitted her, therefore, to recall to her memory all the circumstances of the rousing the hideous animal, assisted by the tribes of both their fathers. She mentioned in broken words the flight of arrows discharged against the boar by young and old, male and female, and how her own well-aimed, but feeble shaft, wounded him sharply; she forgot not how, incensed at the pain, the creature rushed upon her as the cause, laid her palfrey dead upon the spot, and would soon have slain her, had not Hereward, when every attempt failed to bring his horse up to the monster, thrown himself from his seat, and interposed personally between the boar and Bertha. The battle was not decided without a desperate struggle; the boar was slain, but Hereward received the deep gash upon his brow, which she whom he had saved now recalled to her memory. "Alas!" she said, "what have we been to each other

since that period? and what are we now, in this foreign land?"

"Answer for thyself, my Bertha," said the Varangian, "if thou canst;—and if thou canst with truth say that thou art the same Bertha who vowed affection to Hereward, believe me, it were sinful to suppose that the saints have brought us together with a view of our being afterwards separated."

"Hereward," said Bertha, "you have not preserved the bird in your bosom safer than I have; at home or abroad, in servitude or in freedom, amidst sorrow or joy, plenty or want, my thought was always on the troth I had plighted to Hereward at the stone of Odin."

"Say no more of that," said Hereward; "it was an impious rite, and good could not come of it."

"Was it then so impious?" she said, the unbidden tear rushing into her large blue eye.—"Alas! it was a pleasure to reflect that Hereward was mine by that solemn engagement!"

"Listen to me, my Bertha," said Hereward, taking her hand: "We were then almost child-

ren; and though our vow was in itself innocent, yet it was so far wrong, as being sworn in the presence of a dumb idol, representing one who was, while alive, a bloody and cruel magician. But we will, the instant an opportunity offers itself, renew our vow before a shrine of real sanctity, and promise suitable penance for our ignorant acknowledgment of Odin, to propitiate the real Deity, who can bear us through those storms of adversity which are like to surround us."

Leaving them for the time to their love-discourse, of a nature pure, simple, and interesting, we shall give, in few words, all that the reader needs to know of their separate history between the boar's hunt and the time of their meeting in the gardens of Agelastes.

In that doubtful state experienced by outlaws, Waltheoff, the father of Hereward, and Engelred, the parent of Bertha, used to assemble their unsubdued tribes, sometimes in the fertile regions of Devonshire, sometimes in the dark-wooded solitudes of Hampshire, but as much as possible within the call of the bugle of the famous

Edéric the Forester, so long leader of the insurgent Saxons. The chiefs we have mentioned were among the last bold men who asserted the independence of the Saxon race of England; and like their captain, Ederic, they were generally known by the name of Foresters, as men who lived by hunting, when their power of making excursions was checked and repelled. Hence they made a step backwards in civilisation, and became more like to their remote ancestors of German descent, than they were to their more immediate and civilized predecessors, who, before the battle of Hastings, had advanced considerably in the arts of civilized life.

Old superstitions had begun to revive among them, and hence the practice of youths and maidens plighting their troth at the stone circles dedicated, as it was supposed, to Odin, in whom, however, they had long ceased to nourish any of the sincere belief which was entertained by their heathen ancestors.

In another respect, these outlaws were fast re-assuming a striking peculiarity of the ancient Germans. Their circumstances naturally brought the youth of both sexes much together, and by

early marriage, or less permanent connexions, the population would have increased far beyond the means which the outlaws had to maintain, or even to protect themselves. The laws of the Foresters, therefore, strictly enjoined that marriages should be prohibited until the bridegroom was twenty-one years complete. Future alliances were indeed often formed by the young people, nor was this discountenanced by their parents, provided that the lovers waited until the period when the majority of the bridegroom should permit them to marry. Such youths as infringed this rule, incurred the dishonourable epithet of *niddering*, or worthless,—an epithet of a nature so insulting, that men were known to have slain themselves, rather than endure life under such opprobrium. But the offenders were very few amidst a race trained in moderation and self-denial; and hence it was that woman, worshipped for so many years like something sacred, was received, when she became the head of a family, into the arms and heart of a husband who had so long expected her, was treated as something more elevated than the mere idol of

the moment; and feeling the rate at which she was valued, endeavoured by her actions to make her life correspond with it.

It was by the whole population of these tribes, as well as their parents, that after the adventure of the boar hunt, Hereward and Bertha were considered as lovers whose alliance was pointed out by Heaven, and they were encouraged to approximate as much as their mutual inclinations prompted them. The youths of the tribe avoided asking Bertha's hand at the dance, and the maidens used no maidenly entreaty or artifice to detain Hereward beside them, if Bertha was present at the feast. They clasped each other's hands through the perforated stone, which they called the altar of Odin, though later ages have ascribed it to the Druids, and they implored that if they broke their faith to each other, their fault might be avenged by the twelve swords which were now drawn around them during the ceremony by as many youths, and that their misfortunes might be so many as twelve maidens, who stood around with their hair loosened, should be unable to recount, either in prose or verse.

The torch of the Saxon Cupid shone for some years as brilliant as when it was first lighted. The time, however, came when they were to be tried by adversity, though undeserved by the perfidy of either. Years had gone past, and Hereward had to count with anxiety how many months and weeks were to separate him from the bride, who was beginning already by degrees to shrink less shyly from the expressions and caresses of one who was soon to term her all his own. William Rufus, however, had formed a plan of totally extirpating the Foresters, whose implacable hatred, and restless love of freedom, had so often disturbed the quiet of his kingdom, and despised his forest laws. He assembled his Norman forces, and united to them a body of Saxons who had submitted to his rule. He thus brought an overpowering force upon the bands of Waltheoff and Engelred, who found no resource but to throw the females of their tribe, and such as could not bear arms, into a convent dedicated to St Augustin, of which Kenelm their relation was prior, and then turning to the battle, vindicated their ancient valour by fighting

it to the last. Both the unfortunate chiefs remained dead on the field, and Hereward and his brother had wellnigh shared their fate; but some Saxon inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who adventured on the field of battle, which the victors had left bare of every thing save the booty of the kites and the ravens, found the bodies of the youths still retaining life. As they were generally well known and much beloved by these people, Hereward and his brother were taken care of till their wounds began to close, and their strength returned. Hereward then heard the doleful news of the death of his father and Engelred. His next enquiry was concerning his betrothed bride and her mother. The poor inhabitants could give him little information. Some of the females who had taken refuge in the convent, the Norman knights and nobles had seized upon as their slaves, and the rest, with the monks who had harboured them, were turned adrift, and their place of retreat was completely sacked and burnt to the ground.

Half-dead himself at hearing these tidings, Hereward sallied out, and at every risk of death,

for the Saxon Foresters were treated as outlaws, commenced enquiries after those so dear to him. He asked concerning the particular fate of Bertha and her mother, among the miserable creatures who yet hovered about the neighbourhood of the convent, like a few half-scorched bees about their smothered hive. But, in the magnitude of their own terrors, none had retained eyes for their neighbours, and all that they could say was, that the wife and daughter of Engelred were certainly lost; and their imaginations suggested so many heart-rending details to this conclusion, that Hereward gave up all thoughts of further researches, likely to terminate so uselessly and so horribly.

The young Saxon had been all his life bred up in a patriotic hatred to the Normans, who did not, it was likely, become dearer to his thoughts in consequence of this victory. He dreamed at first of crossing the Strait, to make war against the hated enemy in their own country; but an idea so extravagant did not long retain possession of his mind. His fate was decided by his encountering an aged palmer, who knew, or pretended

to have known, his father, and to be a native of England. This man was a disguised Varangian, selected for the purpose, possessed of art and dexterity, and well provided with money. He had little difficulty in persuading Hereward, in the hopeless desolation of his condition, to join the Varangian Guard, at this moment at war with the Normans, under which name it suited Hereward's prepossessions to represent the Emperor's wars with Robert Guiscard, his son Bohemond, and other adventurers, in Italy, Greece, or Sicily. A journey to the East also inferred a pilgrimage, and gave the unfortunate Hereward the chance of purchasing pardon for his sins by visiting the Holy Land. In gaining Hereward, the recruiter also secured the services of his elder brother, who had vowed not to separate from him.

The high character of both brothers for courage, induced this wily agent to consider them as a great prize, and it was from the memoranda respecting the history and character of those whom he recruited, in which the elder had been unreservedly communicative, that Agelastes picked

up the information respecting Hereward's family and circumstances, which, at their first secret interview, he made use of to impress upon the Varangian the idea of his supernatural knowledge. Several of his companions in arms were thus gained over; for it will easily be guessed, that these memorials were intrusted to the keeping of Achilles Tatius, and he, to further their joint purposes, imparted them to Agelastes, who thus obtained a general credit for supernatural knowledge among these ignorant men. But Hereward's blunt faith and honesty enabled him to shun the snare.

Such being the fortunes of Hereward, those of Bertha formed the subject of a broken and passionate communication between the lovers, broken like an April day, and mingled with many a tender caress, such as modesty permits to lovers when they meet again unexpectedly after a separation, which threatened to be eternal. But the story may be comprehended in few words. Amid the general sack of the monastery, an old Norman knight seized upon Bertha as his prize. Struck with her beauty, he de-

signed her as an attendant upon his daughter, just then come out of the years of childhood, and the very apple of her father's eye, being the only child of his beloved countess, and sent late in life to bless their marriage bed. It was in the order of things that the lady of Aspramonte, who was considerably younger than the knight, should govern her husband, and that Brenhilda, their daughter, should govern both her parents.

The Knight of Aspramonte, however, it may be observed, entertained some desire to direct his young offspring to more feminine amusements than those which began already to put her life frequently in danger. Contradiction was not to be thought of, as the good old knight knew by experience. The influence and example of a companion a little older than herself might be of some avail, and it was with this view that, in the confusion of the sack, Aspramonte seized upon the youthful Bertha. Terrified to the utmost degree, she clung to her mother, and the Knight of Aspramonte, who had a softer heart than was then usually found under a steel cuirass, moved by the affliction of the mother and daughter,

and recollecting that the former might also be a useful attendant upon his lady, extended his protection to both, and conveying them out of the press, paid the soldiers who ventured to dispute the spoil with him, partly in some small pieces of money, and partly in dry blows with the reverse of his lance.

The well-natured knight soon after returned to his own castle, and being a man of an orderly life and virtuous habits, the charming beauties of the Saxon virgin, and the more ripened charms of her mother, did not prevent their travelling in all honour as well as safety to his family fortress, the castle of Aspramonte. Here such masters as could be procured were got together to teach the young Bertha every sort of female accomplishment, in the hope that her mistress, Brenhilda, might be inspired with a desire to partake in her education; but although this so far succeeded, that the Saxon captive became highly skilled in such music, needle-work, and other female accomplishments as were known to the time, yet her young mistress, Brenhilda, retained the taste for those martial amusements

which had so sensibly grieved her father, but to which her mother, who herself had nourished such fancies in her youth, readily gave sanction.

The captives, however, were kindly treated. Brenhilda became infinitely attached to the young Anglo-Saxon, whom she loved less for her ingenuity in arts, than for her activity in field sports, to which her early state of independence had trained her.

The Lady of Aspramonte was also kind to both the captives; but, in one particular, she exercised a piece of petty tyranny over them. She had imbibed an idea, strengthened by an old doting father-confessor, that the Saxons were heathens at that time, or at least heretics, and made a positive point with her husband that the bondswoman and girl who were to attend on her person and that of her daughter, should be qualified for the office by being anew admitted into the Christian church by baptism.

Though feeling the falsehood and injustice of the accusation, the mother had sense enough to submit to necessity, and received the name of

Martha, in all form at the altar, to which she answered during the rest of her life.

But Bertha showed a character upon this occasion inconsistent with the general docility and gentleness of her temper. She boldly refused to be admitted anew into the pale of the church, of which her conscience told her she was already a member, or to exchange for another the name originally given her at the font. It was in vain that the old knight commanded, that the lady threatened, and that her mother advised and entreated. More closely pressed in private by her mother, she let her motive be known, which had not before been suspected. "I know," she said, with a flood of tears, "that my father would have died ere I was subjected to this insult; and then—who shall assure me that vows which were made to the Saxon Bertha, will be binding if a French Agatha be substituted in her stead? They may banish me," she said, "or kill me if they will, but if the son of Waltheoff should again meet with the daughter of Engelred, he shall meet that Bertha whom he knew in the forests of Hampton."

All argument was in vain; the Saxon maiden remained obstinate, and, to try to break her resolution, the Lady of Aspramonte at length spoke of dismissing her from the service of her young mistress, and banishing her from the castle. To this also she had made up her mind, and she answered firmly, though respectfully, that she would sorrow bitterly at parting with her young lady; but as to the rest, she would rather beg under her own name, than be recreant to the faith of her fathers, and condemn it as heresy, by assuming one of Frank origin. The Lady Brenhilda, in the meantime, entered the chamber, where her mother was just about to pass the threatened doom of banishment—"Do not stop for my entrance, madam," said the dauntless young lady; "I am as much concerned in the doom which you are about to pass, as is Bertha; if she crosses the draw-bridge of Aspramonte as an exile, so will I, when she has dried her tears, of which even my petulance could never wring one from her eyes. She shall be my squire and body attendant, and Launcelot, the bard, shall follow with my spear and shield."

"And you will return, mistress," said her mother, "from so foolish an expedition, before the sun sets?"

"So Heaven further me in my purpose, lady," answered the young heiress, "the sun shall neither rise nor set that sees us return, till this name of Bertha, and of her mistress, Brenhilda, are wafted as far as the trumpet of fame can sound them.—Cheer up, my sweetest Bertha!" she said, taking her attendant by the hand, "if Heaven hath torn thee from thy country and thy plighted troth, it hath given thee a sister and a friend, with whom thy fame shall be for ever blended."

The Lady of Aspramonte was confounded; She knew that her daughter was perfectly capable of the wild course which she had announced, and that she herself, even with her husband's assistance, would be unable to prevent her following it. She passively listened, therefore, while the Saxon matron, formerly Urica, but now Martha, addressed her daughter. "My child," she said, "as you value honour, virtue, safety, and gratitude, soften your heart towards

your master and mistress, and follow the advice of a parent, who has more years and more judgment than you. And you, my dearest young lady, let not your lady-mother think that an attachment to the exercises you excel in, has destroyed in your bosom filial affection, and a regard to the delicacy of your sex!—As they seem both obstinate, madam," continued the matron, after watching the influence of this advice upon the young women, "perhaps, if it may be permitted me, I could state an alternative, which might, in the meanwhile, satisfy your ladyship's wishes, accommodate itself to the wilfulness of my obstinate daughter, and answer the kind purpose of her generous mistress." The Lady of Aspramonte signed to the Saxon matron to proceed. She went on accordingly: "The Saxons, dearest lady, of the present day, are neither pagans nor heretics; they are, in the time of keeping Easter, as well as in all other disputable doctrine, humbly obedient to the Pope of Rome; and this our good Bishop well knows, since he upbraided some of the domestics for calling me an old heathen. Yet our

names are uncouth in the ears of the Franks, and bear, perhaps, a heathenish sound. If it be not exacted that my daughter submit to a new rite of baptism, she will lay aside her Saxon name of Bertha upon all occasions while in your honourable household. This will cut short a debate which, with forgiveness, I think is scarce of importance enough to break the peace of this castle. I will engage that, in gratitude for this indulgence of a trifling scruple, my daughter, if possible, shall double the zeal and assiduity of her service to her young lady."

The Lady of Aspramonte was glad to embrace the means which this offer presented, of extricating herself from the dispute with as little compromise of dignity as could well be. "If the good Lord Bishop approved of such a compromise," she said, "she would for herself withdraw her opposition." The prelate approved accordingly, the more readily that he was informed that the young heiress desired earnestly such an agreement. The peace of the castle was restored, and Bertha recognised her new name of Agatha as a name of service, but not a name of baptism.

One effect the dispute certainly produced, and that was, increasing in an enthusiastic degree the love of Bertha for her young mistress. With that amiable failing of attached domestics and humble friends, she endeavoured to serve her as she knew she loved to be served; and therefore indulged her mistress in those chivalrous fancies which distinguished her even in her own age, and in ours would have rendered her a female Quixote. Bertha, indeed, never caught the frenzy of her mistress; but, strong, willing, and able-bodied, she readily qualified herself to act upon occasion as a squire of the body to a Lady Adventuress; and, accustomed from her childhood to see blows dealt, blood flowing, and men dying, she could look with an undazzled eye upon the dangers which her mistress encountered, and seldom teazed her with remonstrances, unless when those were unusually great. This compliance on most occasions, gave Bertha a right of advice upon some, which, always given with the best intentions and at fitting times, strengthened her influence with her mistress, which a course of conduct savouring of diametrical opposition would certainly have destroyed.

A few more words serve to announce the death of the Knight of Aspramonte—the romantic marriage of the young lady with the Count of Paris—their engagement in the crusade—and the detail of events with which the reader is acquainted.

Hereward did not exactly comprehend some of the later incidents of the story, owing to a slight strife which arose between Bertha and him during the course of her narrative. When she avowed the girlish simplicity with which she obstinately refused to change her name, because, in her apprehension, the troth-plight betwixt her and her lover might be thereby prejudiced, it was impossible for Hereward not to acknowledge her tenderness, by snatching her to his bosom, and impressing his grateful thanks upon her lips. She extricated herself immediately from his grasp, however, with cheeks more crimsoned in modesty than in anger, and gravely addressed her lover thus: "Enough, enough, Hereward! this may be pardoned to so unexpected a meeting; but we must in future remember, that we are probably the last of our

race, and let it not be said, that the manners of their ancestors were forgotten by Hereward and by Bertha; think, that though we are alone, the shades of our fathers are not far off, and watch to see what use we make of the meeting, which, perhaps, their intercession has procured us."

"You wrong me, Bertha," said Hereward, "if you think me capable of forgetting my own duty and yours, at a moment when our thanks are due to Heaven, to be testified very differently than by infringing on its behests, or the commands of our parents. The question is now, How we shall rejoin each other when we separate? since separate, I fear, we must."

"O! do not say so!" exclaimed the unfortunate Bertha.

"It must be so," said Hereward, "for a time; but I swear to thee by the hilt of my sword, and the handle of my battle-axe, that blade was never so true to shaft as I will be to thee!"

"But wherefore, then, leave me, Hereward?" said the maiden; "and, oh! wherefore not assist me in the release of my mistress?"

"Of thy mistress!" said Hereward. "Shame!

that thou canst give that name to mortal woman!"

"But she *is* my mistress," answered Bertha, "and by a thousand kind ties, which cannot be separated so long as gratitude is the reward of kindness."

"And what is her danger," said Hereward; "what is it she wants, this accomplished lady whom thou callest mistress?"

"Her honour, her life, are alike in danger," said Bertha. "She has agreed to meet the Cæsar in the field, and he will not hesitate, like a base-born miscreant, to take every advantage in the encounter, which, I grieve to say, may in all likelihood be fatal to my mistress."

"Why dost thou think so?" answered Hereward. "This lady has won many single combats, unless she is belied, against adversaries more formidable than the Cæsar."

"True," said the Saxon maiden; "but you speak of things that passed in a far different land, where faith and honour are not empty sounds; as alas! they seem but too surely to be here. Trust me, it is no girlish terror which sends me

out in this disguise of my country dress, which, they say, finds respect at Constantinople: I go to let the chiefs of the Crusade know the peril in which the noble lady stands, and trust to their humanity, to their religion, to their love of honour, and fear of disgrace, for assistance in this hour of need; and now that I have had the blessing of meeting with thee, all besides will go well —all will go well—and I will back to my mistress and report whom I have seen."

"Tarry yet another moment, my recovered treasure!" said Hereward, "and let me balance this matter carefully. This Frankish lady holds the Saxons like the very dust that thou brushest from the hem of her garment. She treats—she regards—the Saxons as pagans and heretics. She has dared to impose slavish tasks upon thee, born in freedom. Her father's sword has been embrued to the hilt with Anglo-Saxon blood—perhaps that of Waltheoff and Engelred has added depth to the stain! She has been, besides, a presumptuous fool, usurping for herself the trophies and warlike character which belong to the other sex. Lastly, it will be hard to find a champion to

fight in her stead, since all the crusaders have passed over to Asia, which is the land, they say, in which they have come to war; and by orders of the Emperor, no means of return to the hither shore will be permitted to any of them."

"Alas! alas!" said Bertha, "how does this world change us! The son of Waltheoff I once knew brave, ready to assist distress, bold and generous. Such was what I pictured him to myself during his absence. I have met him again, and he is calculating, cold, and selfish!"

"Hush, damsel," said the Varangian, "and know him of whom thou speakest, ere thou judgest him. The Countess of Paris is such as I have said; yet let her appear boldly in the lists, and when the trumpet shall sound thrice, another shall reply, which shall announce the arrival of her own noble lord to do battle in her stead; or should he fail to appear—I will requite her kindness to thee, Bertha, and be ready in his place."

"Wilt thou? wilt thou indeed?" said the damsel; "that was spoken like the son of Waltheoff—like the genuine stock! I will home,

and comfort my mistress; for surely if the judgment of God ever directed the issue of a judicial combat, its influence will descend upon this. But you hint that the Count is here—that he is at liberty—she will enquire about that."

"She must be satisfied," replied Hereward, "to know that her husband is under the guidance of a friend, who will endeavour to protect him from his own extravagancies and follies; or, at all events, of one who, if he cannot properly be called a friend, has certainly not acted, and will not act, towards him the part of an enemy.—And now, farewell, long lost—long loved!"—— Before he could say more, the Saxon maiden, after two or three vain attempts to express her gratitude, threw herself into her lover's arms, and, despite the coyness which she had recently shown, impressed upon his lips the thanks which she could not speak.

They parted, Bertha returning to her mistress at the lodge, which she had left both with trouble and danger, and Hereward by the portal kept by the negro-portress, who, complimenting the handsome Varangian on his success among

the fair, intimated, that she had been in some sort a witness of his meeting with the Saxon damsel. A piece of gold, part of a late largesse, amply served to bribe her tongue; and the soldier, clear of the gardens of the philosopher, sped back as he might to the barrack—judging that it was full time to carry some supply to Count Robert, who had been left without food the whole day.

It is a common popular saying, that as the sensation of hunger is not connected with any pleasing or gentle emotion, so it is particularly remarkable for irritating those of anger and spleen. It is not, therefore, very surprising that Count Robert, who had been so unusually long without sustenance, should receive Hereward with a degree of impatience beyond what the occasion merited, and injurious certainly to the honest Varangian, who had repeatedly exposed his life that day for the interest of the Countess and the Count himself.

"Soh, sir!" he said, in that accent of affected restraint by which a superior modifies his displeasure against his inferior into a cold and

scornful expression—"You have played a liberal host to us!—Not that it is of consequence; but methinks a Count of the most Christian kingdom dines not every day with a mercenary soldier, and might expect, if not the ostentatious, at least the needful part of hospitality."

"And methinks," replied the Varangian, "O most Christian Count, that such of your high rank as, by choice or fate, become the guests of such as I, may think themselves pleased, and blame not their host's niggardliness, but the difficulty of his circumstances, if dinner should not present itself oftener than once in four-and-twenty hours." So saying, he clapt his hands together, and his domestic Edric entered. His guest looked astonished at the entrance of this third party into their retirement. "I will answer for this man," said Hereward, and addressed him in the following words: "What food hast thou, Edric, to place before the honourable Count?"

"Nothing but the cold pasty," replied the attendant, "marvellously damaged by your honour's encounter at breakfast."

The military domestic, as intimated, brought forward a large pasty, but which had already that morning sustained a furious attack, insomuch, that Count Robert of Paris, who, like all noble Normans, was somewhat nice and delicate in his eating, was in some doubt whether his scrupulousness should not prevail over his hunger; but on looking more closely, sight, smell, and a fast of twenty hours, joined to convince him that the pasty was an excellent one, and that the charger on which it was presented possessed corners yet untouched. At length, having suppressed his scruples, and made bold inroad upon the remains of the pasty, he paused to partake of a flask of strong red wine which stood invitingly beside him, and a lusty draught increased the good humour which had begun to take place towards Hereward, in exchange for the displeasure with which he had received him.

"Now, by Heaven!" he said, "I myself ought to be ashamed to lack the courtesy which I recommend to others! Here have I, with the manners of a Flemish boor, been devouring the provisions of my gallant host, without even ask-

ing him to sit down at his own table, and to partake of his own good cheer!"

"I will not strain courtesies with you for that," said Hereward; and thrusting his hand into the pasty, he proceeded with great speed and dexterity to devour the miscellaneous contents, a handful of which was inclosed in his grasp. The Count now withdrew from the table, partly in disgust at the rustic proceedings of Hereward, who, however, by now calling Edric to join him in his attack upon the pasty, showed that he had, in fact, according to his manners, subjected himself previously to some observance of respect towards his guest; while the assistance of his attendant enabled him to make a clear cacaabulum of what was left. Count Robert at length summoned up courage sufficient to put a question, which had been trembling upon his lips ever since Hereward had returned.

"Have thine enquiries, my gallant friend, learned more concerning my unfortunate wife, my faithful Brenhilda?"

"Tidings I have," said the Anglo-Saxon, "but whether pleasing or not, yourself must

be the judge. This much I have learned;—she hath, as you know, come under an engagement to meet the Cæsar in arms in the lists, but under conditions which you may perhaps think strange; these, however, she hath entertained without scruple."

"Let me know these terms," said the Count of Paris; "they will, I think, appear less strange in my eyes than in thine."

But while he affected to speak with the utmost coolness, the husband's sparkling eye and crimsoned cheek betrayed the alteration which had taken place in his feelings. "The lady and the Cæsar," said Hereward, "as you partly heard yourself, are to meet in fight; if the Countess wins, of course she remains the wife of the noble Count of Paris; if she loses, she becomes the paramour of the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius."

"Saints and angels forbid!" said Count Robert; "were they to permit such treason to triumph, we might be pardoned for doubting their divinity!"

"Yet methinks," said the Anglo-Saxon, "it were no disgraceful precaution that both you and

I, with other friends, if we can obtain such, should be seen under shield in the lists on the morning of the conflict. To triumph, or to be defeated, is in the hand of fate; but what we cannot fail to witness is, whether or not the lady receives that fair play which is the due of an honourable combatant, and which, as you have yourself seen, can be sometimes basely transgressed in this Grecian empire."

"On that condition," said the Count, "and protesting, that not even the extreme danger of my lady shall make me break through the rule of a fair fight, I will surely attend the lists, if thou, brave Saxon, canst find me any means of doing so.—Yet stay," he continued, after reflecting for a moment, "thou shalt promise not to let her know that her Count is on the field, far less to point him out to her eye among the press of warriors. O, thou dost not know that the sight of the beloved will sometimes steal from us our courage, even when it has most to achieve!"

"We will endeavour," said the Varangian, "to arrange matters according to thy pleasure, so that thou findest out no more fantastical diffi-

culties; for, by my word, an affair so complicated in itself, requires not to be confused by the fine-spun whims of thy national gallantry. Meantime, much must be done this night; and while I go about it, thou, Sir Knight, hadst best remain here, with such disguise of garments, and such food, as Edric may be able to procure for thee. Fear nothing from intrusion on the part of thy neighbours. We Varangians respect each other's secrets, of whatever nature they may chance to be."

CHAPTER X.

But for our trusty brother-in-law—and the Abbot,
With all the rest of that consorted crew,—
Destruction straight shall dog them at the heels:—
Good uncle, help to order several powers
To Oxford, or where'er these traitors are:
They shall not live within this world, I swear.
Richard II.

As Hereward spoke the last words narrated in the foregoing chapter, he left the Count in his apartment, and proceeded to the Blacquernal Palace. We traced his first entrance into the court, but since then he had frequently been summoned, not only by order of the Princess Anna Comnena, who delighted in asking him questions concerning the customs of his native country, and marking down the replies in her own inflated language; but also by the direct

command of the Emperor himself, who had the humour of many princes, that of desiring to obtain direct information from persons in a very inferior station in their Court. The ring which the Princess had given to the Varangian, served as a pass-token more than once, and was now so generally known by the slaves of the palace, that Hereward had only to slip it into the hand of a principal person among them, and was introduced into a small chamber, not distant from the saloon already mentioned, dedicated to the Muses. In this small apartment, the Emperor, his spouse Irene, and their accomplished daughter Anna Comnena, were seated together, clad in very ordinary apparel, as indeed the furniture of the room itself was of the kind used by respectable citizens, saving that matrasses, composed of eider-down, hung before each door to prevent the risk of eaves-dropping.

"Our trusty Varangian," said the Empress.

"My guide and tutor respecting the manners of those steel-clad men," said the Princess Anna Comnena, "of whom it is so necessary that I should form an accurate idea."

"Your Imperial Majesty," said the Empress, "will not, I trust, think your consort and your muse-inspired daughter, are too many to share with you the intelligence brought by this brave and loyal man?"

"Dearest wife and daughter," returned the Emperor, "I have hitherto spared you the burden of a painful secret, which I have locked in my own bosom, at whatever expense of solitary sorrow and unimparted anxiety. Noble daughter, you in particular will feel this calamity, learning, as you must learn, to think odiously of one, of whom it has hitherto been your duty to hold a very different opinion."

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the Princess.

"Rally yourself," said the Emperor; "remember you are a child of the purple chamber, born, not to weep for your father's wrongs, but to avenge them,—not to regard even him who has lain by your side as half so important as the sacred Imperial grandeur, of which you are yourself a partaker."

"What can such words preface?" said Anna Comnena, in great agitation.

"They say," answered the Emperor, "that the Cæsar is an ungrateful man to all my bounties, and even to that which annexed him to my own house, and made him by adoption my own son. He hath consorted himself with a knot of traitors, whose very names are enough to raise the foul fiend, as if to snatch his assured prey!"

"Could Nicephorus do this?" said the astonished and forlorn Princess; "Nicephorus, who has so often called my eyes the lights by which he steered his path? Could he do this to my father, to whose exploits he has listened hour after hour, protesting that he knew not whether it was the beauty of the language, or the heroism of the action, which most enchanted him? Thinking with the same thought, seeing with the same eye, loving with the same heart,—O, my father! it is impossible that he could be so false. Think of the neighbouring Temple of the Muses!"

"And if I did," murmured Alexius in his heart, "I should think of the only apology which could be proposed for the traitor. A little is well enough, but the full soul loatheth the honey-

comb." Then speaking aloud, "My daughter," he said, "be comforted; we ourselves were unwilling to believe the shameful truth; but our guards have been debauched; their commander, that ungrateful Achilles Tatius, with the equal traitor, Agelastes, have been seduced to favour our imprisonment or murder; and, alas for Greece! in the very moment when she required the fostering care of a parent, she was to be deprived of him by a sudden and merciless blow!"

Here the Emperor wept, whether for the loss to be sustained by his subjects, or of his own life, it is hard to say.

"Methinks," said Irene, "your Imperial Highness is slow in taking measures against the danger."

"Under your gracious permission, mother," answered the Princess, "I would rather say he was hasty in giving belief to it. Methinks the evidence of a Varangian, granting him to be ever so stout a man-at-arms, is but a frail guarantee against the honour of your son-in-law—the approved bravery and fidelity of the captain of

your guards—the deep sense, virtue, and profound wisdom, of the greatest of your philosophers"——

"And the conceit of an ever-educated daughter," said the Emperor, "who will not allow her parent to judge in what most concerns him. I will tell thee, Anna, I know every one of them, and the trust which may be reposed in them; the honour of your Nicephorus—the bravery and fidelity of the Acolyte—and the virtue and wisdom of Agelastes—have I not had them all in my purse? And had my purse continued well filled, and my arm strong as it was of late, there they would have still remained. But the butterflies went off as the weather became cold, and I must meet the tempest without their assistance. You talk of want of proof? I have proof sufficient when I see danger; this honest soldier brought me indications which corresponded with my own private remarks, made on purpose. Varangian he shall be of Varangians; Acolyte he shall be named, in place of the present traitor; and who knows what may come thereafter?"

"May it please your Highness," said the Varangian, who had been hitherto silent, "many men in this empire rise to dignity by the fall of their original patrons, but it is a road to greatness to which I cannot reconcile my conscience; moreover, having recovered a friend from whom I was long ago separated, I shall require, in short space, your Imperial license for going hence, where I shall leave thousands of enemies behind me, and, spending my life, like many of my countrymen, under the banner of King William of Scotland"——

"Part with *thee*, most inimitable man!" cried the Emperor, with emphasis; "where shall I get a soldier—a champion—a friend—so faithful?"

"Noble sir," replied the Anglo-Saxon, "I am every way sensible to your goodness and munificence; but let me entreat you to call me by my own name, and to promise me nothing but your forgiveness, for my having been the agent of such confusion among your Imperial servants. Not only is the threatened fate of Achilles Tatius my benefactor; of the Cæsar,

whom I think my well-wisher; and even of Agelastes himself, painful, so far as it is of my bringing round; but also I have known it somehow happen, that those on whom your Imperial Majesty has lavished the most valuable expressions of your favour one day, were the next day food to fatten the chough and crow. And this, I acknowledge, is a purpose, for which I would not willingly have it said I had brought my English limbs to these Grecian shores."

"Call thee by thine own name, my Edward," said the Emperor, (while he muttered aside—"by Heaven, I have again forgot the name of the barbarian!")—"by thine own name certainly for the present, but only until we shall devise one more fitted for the trust we repose in thee. Meantime, look at this scroll, which contains, I think, all the particulars which we have been able to learn of this plot, and give it to these unbelieving women, who will not credit that an Emperor is in danger, till the blades of the conspirators' poniards are clashing within his ribs."

Hereward did as he was commanded, and

having looked at the scroll, and signified, by bending his head, his acquiescence in its contents, he presented it to Irene, who had not read long, ere, with a countenance so embittered that she had difficulty in pointing out the cause of her displeasure to her daughter, she bade her, with animation, "Read that—read that, and judge of the gratitude and affection of thy Cæsar!"

The Princess Anna Comnena awoke from a state of profound and overpowering melancholy, and looked at the passage pointed out to her, at first with an air of languid curiosity, which presently deepened into the most intense interest. She clutched the scroll as a falcon does his prey, her eye lightened with indignation; and it was with the cry of the bird when in fury that she exclaimed, "Bloody-minded, double-hearted traitor! what wouldst thou have? Yes, father," she said, rising in fury, "it is no longer the voice of a deceived princess that shall intercede to avert from the traitor Nicephorus the doom he has deserved! Did he think that one born in the purple chamber could be divorced

—murdered perhaps—with the petty formula of the Romans, 'Restore the keys—be no longer my domestic drudge?'* Was a daughter of the blood of Comnenus liable to such insults as the meanest of Quirites might bestow on a family housekeeper!"

So saying, she dashed the tears from her eyes, and her countenance, naturally that of beauty and gentleness, became animated with the expression of a fury. Hereward looked at her with a mixture of fear, dislike, and compassion. She again burst forth, for nature having given her considerable abilities, had lent her at the same time an energy of passion, far superior in power to the cold ambition of Irene, or the wily, ambidexter, shuffling policy of the Emperor.

"He shall abye it," said the Princess; "he shall dearly abye it! False, smiling, cozening traitor!—and for that unfeminine barbarian! Something of this I guessed even at that old fool's banqueting-house; and yet if this unwor-

* The Laconic form of the Roman divorce.

thy Cæsar submits his body to the chance of arms, he is less prudent than I have some reason to believe. Think you he will have the madness to brand us with such open neglect, my father? and will you not invent some mode of insuring our revenge?"

"Soh!" thought the Emperor, "this difficulty is over; she will run down hill to her revenge, and will need the snaffle and curb more than the lash. If every jealous dame in Constantinople were to pursue her fury as unrelentingly, our laws should be written, like Draco's, not in ink, but in blood.—Attend to me now," he said aloud, "my wife, my daughter, and thou, dear Edward, and you shall learn, and you three only, my mode of navigating the vessel of the state through these shoals.

"Let us see distinctly," continued Alexius, "the means by which they propose to act, and these shall instruct us how to meet them. A certain number of the Varangians are unhappily seduced, under pretence of wrongs, artfully stirred up by their villainous general. A part of them are studiously to be arranged nigh our per-

son—the traitor Ursel, some of them suppose, is dead, but if it were so, his name is sufficient to draw together his old factionaries—I have a means of satisfying them on that point, on which I shall remain silent for the present.—A considerable body of the Immortal guards have also given way to seduction; they are to be placed to support the handful of treacherous Varangians, who are in the plot to attack our person.—Now, a slight change in the stations of the soldiery, which thou, my faithful Edward—or—a—a—whatever thou art named, for which thou, I say, shalt have full authority, will derange the plans of the traitors, and place the true men in such position around them as to cut them to pieces with little trouble."

"And the combat, my lord?" said the Saxon.

"Thou hadst been no true Varangian hadst thou not enquired after that," said the Emperor, nodding good-humouredly towards him. "As to the combat, the Cæsar has devised it, and it shall be my care that he shall not retreat from the dangerous part of it. He cannot in honour avoid fighting with this woman, strange as the combat

is; and however it ends, the conspiracy will break forth, and as assuredly as it comes against persons prepared, and in arms, shall it be stifled in the blood of the conspirators!"

"My revenge does not require this," said the Princess; "and your Imperial honour is also interested that this Countess shall be protected."

"It is little business of mine," said the Emperor. "She comes here with her husband altogether uninvited. He behaves with insolence in my presence, and deserves whatever may be the issue to himself or his lady of their mad adventure. In sooth, I desired little more than to give him a fright with those animals whom their ignorance judged enchanted, and to give his wife a slight alarm about the impetuosity of a Grecian lover, and there my vengeance should have ended. But it may be that his wife may be taken under my protection, now that little revenge is over."

"And a paltry revenge it was," said the Empress, "that you, a man past middle life, and with a wife who might command some attention, should constitute yourself the object of alarm to

such a handsome man as Count Robert, and the Amazon his wife."

"By your favour, dame Irene, no," said the Emperor. "I left that part of the proposed comedy to my son-in-law the Cæsar."

But when the poor Emperor had in some measure stopt one floodgate, he effectually opened another, and one which was more formidable. "The more shame to your Imperial wisdom, my father!" exclaimed the Princess Anna Comnena; "it is a shame, that with wisdom and a beard like yours, you should be meddling in such indecent follies as admit disturbance into private families, and that family your own daughter's! Who can say that the Cæsar Nicephorus Briennius ever looked astray towards another woman than his wife, till the Emperor taught him to do so, and involved him in a web of intrigue and treachery, in which he has endangered the life of his father-in-law?"

"Daughter! daughter! daughter!"—said the Empress; "daughter of a she-wolf, I think, to goad her parent at such an unhappy time, when

all the leisure he has is too little to defend his life!"

"Peace, I pray you, women both, with your senseless clamours," answered Alexius, "and let me at least swim for my life undisturbed with your folly. God knows if I am a man to encourage, I will not say the reality of wrong, but even its mere appearance."

These words he uttered, crossing himself, with a devout groan. His wife Irene, in the meantime, stept before him, and said, with a bitterness in her looks and accent, which only long-concealed nuptial hatred breaking forth at once could convey,—"Alexius, terminate this affair how it will, you have lived a hypocrite, and thou wilt not fail to die one." So saying, with an air of noble indignation, and carrying her daughter along with her, she swept out of the apartment.

The Emperor looked after her in some confusion. He soon, however, recovered his self-possession, and turning to Hereward, with a look of injured majesty, said, "Ah! my dear Edward," —for the word had become rooted in his mind,

instead of the less euphonic name of Hereward, —" thou seest how it is even with the greatest, and that the Emperor, in moments of difficulty, is a subject of misconstruction, as well as the meanest burgess of Constantinople; nevertheless, my trust is so great in thee, Edward, that I would have thee believe, that my daughter, Anna Comnena, is not of the temper of her mother, but rather of my own; honouring, thou mayest see, with religious fidelity, the unworthy ties which I hope soon to break, and assort her with other fetters of Cupid, which shall be borne more lightly. Edward, my main trust is in thee. Accident presents us with an opportunity, happy of the happiest so it be rightly improved, of having all the traitors before us assembled on one fair field. Think, *then*, on that day, as the Franks say at their tournaments, that fair eyes behold thee. Thou canst not devise a gift within my power, but I will gladly load thee with it."

" It needs not," said the Varangian, somewhat coldly; " my highest ambition is to merit the epithet upon my tomb, ' Hereward was faithful.' I am about, however, to demand a proof

of your imperial confidence, which, perhaps, you may think a startling one."

"Indeed!" said the Emperor. "What, in one word, is thy demand?"

"Permission," replied Hereward, "to go to the Duke of Bouillon's encampment, and entreat his presence in the lists, to witness this extraordinary combat."

"That he may return with his crusading madmen," said the Emperor, "and sack Constantinople, under pretence of doing justice to his confederates? This, Varangian, is at least speaking thy mind openly."

"No, by Heavens!" said Hereward suddenly; "the Duke of Bouillon shall come with no more knights than may be a reasonable guard, should treachery be offered to the Countess of Paris."

"Well, even in this," said the Emperor, "will I be conformable; and if thou, Edward, betrayest my trust, think that thou forfeitest all that my friendship has promised, and dost incur, besides, the damnation that is due to the traitor who betrays with a kiss."

"For thy reward, noble sir," answered the

Varangian, "I hereby renounce all claim to it. When the diadem is once more firmly fixed upon thy brow, and the sceptre in thy hand, if I am then alive, if my poor services should deserve so much, I will petition thee for the means of leaving this court, and returning to the distant island in which I was born. Meanwhile, think me not unfaithful, because I have for a time the means of being so with effect. Your Imperial Highness shall learn that Hereward is as true as is your right hand to your left."—So saying, he took his leave with a profound obeisance.

The Emperor gazed after him with a countenance in which doubt was mingled with admiration.

"I have trusted him," he said, "with all he asked, and with the power of ruining me entirely, if such be his purpose. He has but to breathe a whisper, and the whole mad crew of crusaders, kept in humour at the expense of so much current falsehood, and so much more gold, will return with fire and sword to burn down Constantinople, and sow with salt the place where it stood. I have done what I had resolved never

so do,—I have ventured kingdom and life on the faith of a man born of a woman. How often have I said, my sweet, that I would not hazard myself on such peril, and yet, step by step, I have done so! I cannot tell, there is in that man's looks and words a good faith which overwhelms me; and, what is almost incredible, my belief in him has increased in proportion to his showing me how slight my power was over him. I threw, like the wily angler, every bait I could devise, and some of them such as a king would scarcely have disdained; to none of these would he rise; but yet he gorges, I may say, the bare hook, and enters upon my service without a shadow of self-interest.—Can this be double-distilled treachery?—or can it be what men call disinterestedness?—If I thought him false, the moment is not yet past—he has not yet crossed the bridge—he has not past the guards of the palace, who have no hesitation, and know no disobedience—But no—I were then alone in the land, and without a friend or confident.—I hear the sound of the outer gate unclose, the sense of danger certainly renders my ears more acute than usual.—It shuts

again—the die is cast. He is at liberty—and Alexius Comnenus must stand or fall, according to the uncertain faith of a mercenary Varangian." He clapt his hands; a slave appeared, of whom he demanded wine. He drank, and his heart was cheered within him. "I am decided," he said, "and will abide with resolution the cast of the throw, for good or for evil."

So saying, he retired to his apartment, and was not again seen during that night.

CHAPTER XI.

And aye, as if for death, some lonely trumpet peal'd.
CAMPBELL.

THE Varangian, his head agitated with the weighty matters which were imposed on him, stopt from time to time as he journeyed through the moonlight streets, to arrest passing ideas as they shot through his mind, and consider them with accuracy in all their bearings. His thoughts were such as animated or alarmed him alternately, each followed by a confused throng of accompaniments which it suggested, and banished again in its turn by reflections of another description. It was one of those conjunctures when the minds of ordinary men feel themselves unable to support a burden which is suddenly flung upon them, and when, on the contrary, those of

uncommon fortitude, and that best of Heaven's gifts, good sense, founded on presence of mind, feel their talents awakened and regulated for the occasion, like a good steed under the management of a rider of courage and experience.

As he stood in one of those fits of reverie, which repeatedly during that night arrested his stern military march, Hereward thought that his ear caught the note of a distant trumpet. This surprised him; a trumpet blown at that late hour, and in the streets of Constantinople, argued something extraordinary; for as all military movements were the subject of special ordinance, the etiquette of the night could hardly have been transgressed without some great cause. The question was, what that cause could be?

Had the insurrection broken out unexpectedly, and in a different manner from what the conspirators proposed to themselves?—If so, his meeting with his plighted bride, after so many years' absence, was but a delusive preface to their separating for ever. Or had the crusaders, a race of men upon whose motions it was difficult

to calculate, suddenly taken arms and returned from the opposite shore to surprise the city? This might very possibly be the case; so numerous had been the different causes of complaint afforded to the crusaders, that when they were now for the first time assembled into one body, and had heard the stories which they could reciprocally tell concerning the perfidy of the Greeks, nothing was so likely, so natural, even perhaps so justifiable, as that they should study revenge.

But the sound rather resembled a point of war regularly blown, than the tumultuous blare of bugle-horns and trumpets, the accompaniments at once, and the annunciation, of a taken town, in which the horrid circumstances of storm had not yet given place to such stern peace as the victor's weariness of slaughter and rapine allows at length to the wretched inhabitants. Whatever it was, it was necessary that Herewand should learn its purport, and therefore he made his way into a broad street near the barracks, from which the sound seemed to come, to which

point, indeed, his way was directed for other reasons.

The inhabitants of that quarter of the town did not appear violently startled by this military signal. The moonlight slept on the street, crossed by the gigantic shadowy towers of Saneta Sophia, which the infidels, since their occupation of the city, had turned into their principal mosque. No human being appeared in the streets, and such as for an instant looked from their doors or from their lattices, seemed to have their curiosity quickly satisfied, for they withdrew their heads, and secured the opening through which they had peeped.

Hereward could not help remembering the traditions which were recounted by the fathers of his tribe, in the deep woods of Hampshire, and which spoke of invisible huntsmen, who were heard to follow with viewless horses and hounds the unseen chase through the depths of the forests of Germany. Such it seemed were the sounds with which these haunted woods were wont to ring while the wild chase was up; and

with such apparent terror did the hearers listen to their clamour.

"Fie!" he said, as he suppressed within him a tendency to the same superstitious fears; "do such childish fancies belong to a man trusted with so much, and from whom so much is expected?" He paced down the street, therefore, with his battle-axe over his shoulder, and the first person whom he saw venturing to look out of his door, he questioned concerning the cause of this military music at such an unaccustomed hour.

"I cannot tell, so please you, my lord," said the citizen, unwilling, it appeared, to remain in the open air, or to enter into conversation, and greatly disposed to decline further questioning. This was the political citizen of Constantinople whom we met with at the beginning of this history, and who, hastily stepping into his habitation, eschewed all further conversation.

The wrestler Stephanos showed himself at the next door, which was garlanded with oak and ivy leaves, in honour of some recent victory. He stood unshrinking, partly encouraged by the consciousness of personal strength, and partly by a

rugged surliness of temper, which is often mistaken among persons of this kind for real courage. His admirer and flatterer, Lysimachus, kept himself ensconced behind his ample shoulders.

As Hereward passed, he put the same question as he did to the former citizen,—"Know you the meaning of these trumpets sounding so late?"

"You should know best yourself," answered Stephanos doggedly; "for, to judge by your axe and helmet, they are your trumpets, and not ours, which disturb honest men in their first sleep."

"Varlet!" answered the Varangian, with an emphasis which made the prizer start,—"but—when that trumpet sounds, it is no time for a soldier to punish insolence as it deserves."

The Greek started back and bolted into his house, nearly overthrowing in the speed of his retreat the artist Lysimachus, who was listening to what passed.

Hereward passed on to the barracks, where the military music had seemed to halt; but on

the Varangian crossing the threshold of the ample court-yard, it broke forth again with a tremendous burst, whose clangour almost stunned him, though well accustomed to the sounds. "What is the meaning of this, Engelbrecht?" he said to the Varangian sentinel, who paced axe-in-hand before the entrance.

"The proclamation of a challenge and combat," answered Engelbrecht. "Strange things toward, comrade; the frantic crusaders have bit the Grecians, and infected them with their humour of tilting, as they say dogs do each other with madness."

Hereward made no reply to the sentinel's speech, but pressed forward into a knot of his fellow-soldiers who were assembled in the court, half-armed, or, more properly, in total disarray, as just arisen from their beds, and huddled around the trumpets of the corps, which were drawn out in full pomp. He of the gigantic instrument, whose duty it was to intimate the express commands of the Emperor, was not wanting in his place, and the musicians were supported by a band of the Varangians in arms,

headed by Achilles Tatius himself. Hereward could also notice, on approaching nearer, as his comrades made way for him, that six of the Imperial heralds were on duty on this occasion; four of these (two acting at the same time) had already made proclamation, which was to be repeated for the third time by the two last, as was the usual fashion in Constantinople with Imperial mandates of great consequence. Achilles Tatius, the moment he saw his confidant, made him a sign, which Hereward understood as conveying a desire to speak with him after the proclamation was over. The herald, after the flourish of trumpets had finished, commenced in these words:

"By the authority of the resplendent and divine Prince Alexius Comnenus, Emperor of the most holy Roman empire, his Imperial Majesty desires it to be made known to all and sundry the subjects of his empire, whatever their race of blood may be, or at whatever shrine of divinity they happen to bend—Know ye, therefore, that upon the second day after this is dated, our beloved

son-in-law, the much-esteemed Cæsar, hath taken upon him to do battle with our sworn enemy, Robert, Count of Paris, on account of his insolent conduct, by presuming publicly to occupy our royal seat, and no less by breaking, in our Imperial presence, those curious specimens of art, ornamenting our throne, called by tradition the Lions of Solomon. And that there may not remain a man in Europe who shall dare to say that the Grecians are behind other parts of the world in any of the manly exercises which Christian nations use, the said noble enemies, renouncing all assistance from falsehood, from spells, or from magic, shall debate this quarrel in three courses with grinded spears, and three passages of arms with sharpened swords; the field to be at the judgment of the honourable Emperor, and to be decided at his most gracious and unerring pleasure. And so God show the right!"

Another formidable flourish of the trumpets concluded the ceremony. Achilles then dismissed the attendant troops, as well as the heralds and musicians, to their respective quarters; and having got Hereward close to his side, enquired

of him whether he had learned any thing of the prisoner, Robert, Count of Paris.

"Nothing," said the Varangian, "save the tidings your proclamation contains."

"You think, then," said Achilles, "that the Count has been a party to it?"

"He ought to have been so," answered the Varangian. "I know no one but himself entitled to take burden for his appearance in the lists."

"Why, look you," said the Acolyte, "my most excellent, though blunt-witted Herewand, this Cæsar of ours hath had the extravagance to venture his tender wit in comparison to that of Achilles Tatius. He stands upon his honour too, this ineffable fool, and is displeased with the idea of being supposed either to challenge a woman, or to receive a challenge at her hand. He has substituted, therefore, the name of the lord instead of the lady. If the Count fail to appear, the Cæsar walks forward challenger and successful combatant at a cheap rate, since no one has encountered him, and claims that the lady should be delivered up to him as captive of his dreaded

bow and spear. This will be the signal for a general tumult, in which, if the Emperor be not slain on the spot, he will be conveyed to the dungeon of his own Blacquernal, there to endure the doom which his cruelty has inflicted upon so many others."

"But—" said the Varangian.

"But—but—but," said his officer; "but thou art a fool. Canst thou not see that this gallant Cæsar is willing to avoid the risk of encountering with this lady, while he earnestly desires to be supposed willing to meet her husband? It is our business to fix the combat in such a shape as to bring all who are prepared for insurrection together in arms to play their parts. Do thou only see that our trusty friends are placed near to the Emperor's person, and in such a manner as to keep from him the officious and meddling portion of guards, who may be disposed to assist him; and whether the Cæsar fights a combat with lord or lady, or whether there be any combat at all or not, the revolution shall be accomplished, and the Patti shall replace the Comneni upon the Imperial throne of Constantinople. Go,

my trusty Hereward. Thou wilt not forget that the signal word of the insurrection is Ursel, who lives in the affections of the people, although his body, it is said, has long lain a corpse in the dungeons of the Blacquernal."

"What was this Ursel," said Hereward, "of whom I hear men talk so variously?"

"A competitor for the crown with Alexius Comnenus—good, brave, and honest; but overpowered by the cunning, rather than the skill or bravery of his foe. He died, as I believe, in the Blacquernal; though when, or how, there are few that can say. But, up and be doing, my Hereward! Speak encouragement to the Varangians—Interest whomsoever thou canst to join us. Of the Immortals, as they are called, and of the discontented citizens, enough are prepared to fill up the cry, and follow in the wake of those on whom we must rely as the beginners of the enterprise. No longer shall Alexius's cunning, in avoiding popular assemblies, avail to protect him; he cannot, with regard to his honour, avoid being present at a combat to be fought beneath his own eye; and Mercury be praised for the eloquence which inspired him,

after some hesitation, to determine for the proclamation?"

"You have seen him, then, this evening?" said the Varangian.

"Seen him! Unquestionably," answered the Acolyte. "Had I ordered these trumpets to be sounded without his knowledge, the blast had blown the head from my shoulders."

"I had wellnigh met you at the palace," said Hereward; while his heart throbbed almost as high as if he had actually had such a dangerous encounter.

"I heard something of it," said Achilles; "that you came to take the parting orders of him who now acts the sovereign. Surely, had I seen you there, with that steadfast, open, seemingly honest countenance, cheating the wily Greek by very dint of blantness, I had not forborne laughing at the contrast between that and the thoughts of thy heart."

"God alone," said Hereward, "knows the thoughts of our hearts; but I take Him to witness, that I am faithful to my promise, and will discharge the task intrusted to me."

"Brave! mine honest Anglo-Saxon," said

Achilles. "I pray thee to call my slaves to unarm me; and when thou thyself doffest those weapons of an ordinary lifeguard's-man, tell them they never shall above twice more enclose the limbs of one for whom fate has much more fitting garments in store."

Hereward dared not intrust his voice with an answer to so critical a speech; he bowed profoundly, and retired to his own quarters in the building.

Upon entering the apartment, he was immediately saluted by the voice of Count Robert, in joyful accents, not suppressed by the fear of making himself heard, though prudence should have made that uppermost in his mind.

"Hast thou heard it, my dear Hereward," he said—"hast thou heard the proclamation, by which this Greek antelope hath defied me to tilting with grinded spears, and fighting three passages of arms with sharpened swords? Yet there is something strange, too, that he should not think it safer to hold my lady to the encounter? He may think, perhaps, that the crusaders would not permit such a battle to be fought.

But, by our Lady of the Broken Lances! he little knows that the men of the west hold their ladies' character for courage as jealously as they do their own. This whole night have I been considering in what armour I shall clothe me; what shift I shall make for a steed; and whether I shall not honour him sufficiently by using Tranchefer, as my only weapon, against his whole armour, offensive and defensive."

"I shall take care, however," said Hereward, "that thou art better provided in case of need. —Thou knowest not the Greeks."

CHAPTER XII.

THE Varangian did not leave the Count of Paris until the latter had placed in his hands his signet-ring, *semee* (as the heralds express it), *with lances splintered*, and bearing the proud motto, "Mine yet unscathed." Provided with this symbol of confidence, it was now his business to take order for communicating the approaching solemnity to the leader of the crusading army, and demanding for him, in the name of Robert of Paris, and the Lady Brenhilda, such a detachment of western cavaliers as might ensure strict observance of honour and honesty in the arrangement of the lists, and during the progress of the combat. The duties imposed on Hereward were such as to render it imposible for him to proceed personally to the camp of Godfrey; and though there were many of the Varangians in whose fidelity he

could have trusted, he knew of none among those under his immediate command whose intelligence, on so novel an occasion, might be entirely depended on. In this perplexity he strolled, perhaps without well knowing why, to the gardens of Agelastes, where fortune once more produced him an interview with Bertha.

No sooner had Hereward made her aware of his difficulty, than the faithful bower-maiden's resolution was taken.

"I see," said she, "that the peril of this part of the adventure must rest with me; and wherefore should it not? My mistress, in the bosom of prosperity, offered herself to go forth into the wide world for my sake; I will for hers go to the camp of this Frankish lord. He is an honourable man, and a pious Christian, and his followers are faithful pilgrims. A woman can have nothing to fear who goes to such men upon such an errand."

The Varangian was too well acquainted with the manners of camps to permit the fair Bertha to go alone on such an errand. He provided, therefore, for her safeguard a trusty old soldier,

bound to his person by long kindness and confidence; and having thoroughly possessed her of the particulars of the message she was to deliver, and desired her to be in readiness without the enclosure at peep of dawn, returned once more to his barracks.

With the earliest light, Hereward was again at the spot where he had parted overnight with Bertha, accompanied by the honest soldier to whose care he meant to confide her. In a short time, he had seen them safely on board of a ferry-boat lying in the harbour; the master of which readily admitted them, after some examination of their license to pass to Scutari, which was forged in the name of the Acolyte, as authorized by that foul conspirator, and which agreed with the appearance of old Osmund and his young charge.

The morning was lovely; and ere long the town of Scutari opened on the view of the travellers, glittering, as now, with a variety of architecture, which, though it might be termed fantastical, could not be denied the praise of beauty. These buildings rose boldly out of a

thick grove of cypresses, and other huge trees, the larger probably, as they were respected for filling the cemeteries, and being the guardians of the dead.

At the period we mention, another circumstance, no less striking than beautiful, rendered doubly interesting a scene which must have been at all times greatly so. A large portion of that miscellaneous army, which came to regain the holy places of Palestine, and the blessed Sepulchre itself, from the infidels, had established themselves in a camp within a mile, or thereabouts, of Scutari. Although, therefore, the crusaders were destitute in a great measure of the use of tents, the army (excepting the pavilions of some leaders of high rank) had constructed for themselves temporary huts, not unpleasing to the eye, being decorated with leaves and flowers, while the tall pennons and banners that floated over them with various devices, showed that the flower of Europe were assembled at that place. A loud and varied murmur, resembling that of a thronged hive, floated from the camp of the crusaders to the neighbouring

town of Scutari, and every now and then the deep tone was broken by some shriller sound, the note of some musical instrument, or the treble scream of some child or female, in fear or in gayety.

The party at length landed in safety; and as they approached one of the gates of the camp, there sallied forth a brisk array of gallant cavaliers, pages, and squires, exercising their masters' horses or their own. From the noise they made, conversing at the very top of their voices, galloping, curveting, and prancing their palfreys, it seemed as if their early discipline had called them to exercise ere the fumes of last night's revel were thoroughly dissipated by repose. So soon as they saw Bertha and her party, they approached them with cries which marked their country was Italy.

"Al'-erta! al'erta!—Roba de guadagno, cameradi!"*

They gathered around the Anglo-Saxon maid-

* That is—"Take heed! take heed!—there is booty, comrades!"

en and her companions, repeating their cries in a manner which made Bertha tremble. Their general demand was, "What was her business in their camp?"

"I would to the general-in-chief, cavaliers," answered Bertha, "having a secret message to his ear."

"For whose ear?" said a leader of the party, a handsome youth of about eighteen years of age, who seemed either to have a sounder brain than his fellows, or to have overflowed it with less wine. "Which of our leaders do you come hither to see?" he demanded.

"Godfrey of Bouillon."

"Indeed!" said the page who had spoken first; "can nothing of less consequence serve thy turn? Take a look amongst us; young are we all, and reasonably wealthy. My Lord of Bouillon is old, and if he has any sequins, he is not like to lavish them in this way."

"Still I have a token to Godfrey of Bouillon," answered Bertha, "an assured one; and he will little thank any who obstructs my free passage to him;" and therewithal showing a

little case, in which the signet of the Count of Paris was enclosed, "I will trust it in your hands," she said, "if you promise not to open it, but to give me free access to the noble leader of the crusaders."

"I will," said the youth, "and if such be the Duke's pleasure, thou shalt be admitted to him."

"Ernest the Apulian, thy dainty Italian wit is caught in a trap," said one of his companions.

"Thou art an ultramontane fool, Polydore," returned Ernest; "there may be more in this than either thy wit or mine is able to fathom. This maiden and one of her attendants wear a dress belonging to the Varangian Imperial guard. They have perhaps been intrusted with a message from the Emperor, and it is not irreconcilable with Alexius's politics to send it through such messengers as these. Let us, therefore, convey them in all honour to the General's tent."

"With all my heart," said Polydore. "A blue-eyed wench is a pretty thing, but I like not the sauce of the camp-marshal, nor his taste

in attiring men who give way to temptation.* Yet, see, I prove a fool like my companion. I would ask, who or what this pretty maiden is, who comes to put noble princes and holy pilgrims in mind that they have in their time had the follies of men?"

Bertha advanced and whispered in the ear of Ernest. Meantime joke followed jest, among Polydore and the rest of the gay youths, in riotous and ribald succession, which, however characteristic of the rude speakers, may as well be omitted here. Their effect was to shake in some degree the fortitude of the Saxon maiden, who had some difficulty in mustering courage to address them. "As you have mothers, gentlemen," she said, "as you have fair sisters, whom you would protect from dishonour with your best blood—as you love and honour those holy places which you are sworn to free from the infidel enemy, have compassion on me, that you may merit success in your undertaking!"

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* Persons among the Crusaders found guilty of certain offences, did penance in a dress of tar and feathers, though it is supposed a punishment of modern invention.

"Fear nothing, maiden," said Ernest, "I will be your protector; and you, my comrades, be ruled by me. I have, during your brawling, taken a view, though somewhat against my promise, of the pledge which she bears, and if she who presents it is affronted or maltreated, be assured Godfrey of Bouillon will severely avenge the wrong done her."

"Nay, comrade, if thou canst warrant us so much," said Polydore, "I will myself be most anxious to conduct the young woman in honour and safety to Sir Godfrey's tent."

"The princes," said Ernest, "must be nigh meeting there at council. What I have said I will warrant and uphold with hand and life. More I might guess, but I conclude this sensible young maiden can speak for herself."

"Now, Heaven bless thee, gallant squire," said Bertha, "and make thee alike brave and fortunate! Embarrass yourself no farther about me, than to deliver me safe to your leader, Godfrey."

"We spend time," said Ernest, springing from his horse. "You are no soft Eastern, fair

maid, and I presume you will find yourself under no difficulty in managing a quiet horse?"

"Not the least," said Bertha, as, wrapping herself in her cassock, she sprung from the ground, and alighted upon the spirited palfrey, as a linnet stoops upon a rose-bush. "And now, sir, as my business really brooks no delay, I will be indebted to you to show me instantly to the tent of Duke Godfrey of Bouillon."

By availing herself of this courtesy of the young Apulian, Bertha imprudently separated herself from the old Varangian; but the intentions of the youth were honourable, and he conducted her through the tents and huts to the pavilion of the celebrated General-in-chief of the Crusade.

"Here," he said, "you must tarry for a space, under the guardianship of my companions," (for two or three of the pages had accompanied them, out of curiosity to see the issue,) "and I will take the commands of the Duke of Bouillon upon the subject."

To this nothing could be objected, and Bertha had nothing better to do, than to admire the out-

side of the tent, which, in one of Alexius's fits of generosity and munificence, had been presented by the Greek Emperor to the Chief of the Franks. It was raised upon tall spear-shaped poles, which had the semblance of gold; its curtains were of a thick stuff, manufactured of silk, cotton, and gold thread. The warders who stood round, were (at least during the time that the council was held) old grave men, the personal squires of the body, most of them, of the sovereigns who had taken the Cross, and who could, therefore, be trusted as a guard over the assembly, without danger of their blabbing what they might overhear. Their appearance was serious and considerate, and they looked like men who had taken upon them the Cross, not as an idle adventure of arms, but as a purpose of the most solemn and serious nature. One of these stopt the Italian, and demanded what business authorized him to press forward into the council of the crusaders, who were already taking their seats. The page answered by giving his name, "Ernest of Otranto, page of Prince Tancred;" and stated that he announced a young woman, who bore a token to

the Duke of Bouillon, adding that it was accompanied by a message for his own ear.

Bertha, meantime, laid aside her mantle, or upper garment, and disposed the rest of her dress according to the Anglo-Saxon costume. She had hardly completed this task, before the page of Prince Tancred returned, to conduct her into the presence of the council of the Crusade. She followed his signal; while the other young men who had accompanied her, wondering at the apparent ease with which she gained admittance, drew back to a respectful distance from the tent, and there canvassed the singularity of their morning's adventure.

In the meanwhile, the ambassadress herself entered the council chamber, exhibiting an agreeable mixture of shamefacedness and reserve, together with a bold determination to do her duty at all events. There were about fifteen of the principal crusaders assembled in council, with their chieftain Godfrey. He himself was a tall strong man, arrived at that period of life in which men are supposed to have lost none of their resolution, while they have acquired a wisdom and

circumspection unknown to their earlier years. The countenance of Godfrey bespoke both prudence and boldness, and resembled his hair, where a few threads of silver were already mingled with his raven locks.

Tancred, the noblest knight of the Christian chivalry, sat at no great distance from him, with Hugh, Earl of Vermandois, generally called the Great Count, the selfish and wily Bohemond, the powerful Raymond of Provence, and others of the principal crusaders, all more or less completely sheathed in armour.

Bertha did not allow her courage to be broken down, but advancing with a timid grace towards Godfrey, she placed in his hands the signet which had been restored to her by the young page, and after a deep obeisance, spoke these words: "Godfrey, Count of Bouillon, Count of Lorraine the Lower, Chief of the Holy Enterprise called the Crusade, and you, his gallant comrades, peers, and companions, by whatever titles you may be honoured, I, a humble maiden of England, daughter of Engelred, originally a franklin of Hampshire, and since Chieftain of

the Foresters, or free Anglo-Saxons, under the command of the celebrated Edric, do claim what credence is due to the bearer of the true pledge which I put into your hand, on the part of one not the least considerable of your own body, Count Robert of Paris"——

"Our most honourable confederate," said Godfrey, looking at the ring. "Most of you, my lords, must, I think, know this signet—a field sown with the fragments of many splintered lances." The signet was handed from one of the assembly to another, and generally recognised.

When Godfrey had signified so much, the maiden resumed her message. "To all true crusaders, therefore, comrades of Godfrey of Bouillon, and especially to the Duke himself,—to all, I say, excepting Bohemond of Antioch, whom he counts unworthy of his notice"——

"Ha! me unworthy of his notice," said Bohemond. "What mean you by that, damsel?—But the Count of Paris shall answer it to me."

"Under your favour, Sir Bohemond," said Godfrey, "no. Our articles renounce the send-

ing of challenges among ourselves, and the matter, if not dropt betwixt the parties, must be referred to the voice of this honourable council."

"I think I guess the business now, my lord," said Bohemond. "The Count of Paris is disposed to turn and tear me, because I offered him good counsel on the evening before we left Constantinople, when he neglected to accept or be guided by it"——

"It will be the more easily explained, when we have heard his message," said Godfrey.—"Speak forth Lord Robert of Paris's charge, damsel, that we may take some order with that which now seems a perplexed business."

Bertha resumed her message; and, having briefly narrated the recent events, thus concluded:—"The battle is to be done to-morrow, about two hours after day-break, and the Count entreats of the noble Duke of Bouillon that he will permit some fifty of the lances of France to attend the deed of arms, and secure that fair and honourable conduct, which he has otherwise some doubts of receiving at the hands of his adversary.

On if any young and gallant knight should, of his own free will, wish to view the said combat, that Christ will find his presence as dear to him as always he desires that the name of such knight be numbered carefully with the armed crusaders who shall attend in the lists, and that the whole shall be limited, by Duke Godfrey's own inspection, to fifty lances only, which are enough to obtain the protection required, while more would be considered as a preparation for aggression upon the Grecians, and occasion the revival of disputes which are now happily at rest."

Bertha had no sooner finished delivering her manifesto, and made with great grace her obeisance to the council, than a sort of whisper took place in the assembly, which soon assumed a more lively tone.

Their solemn vow not to turn their back upon Palestine, now that they had set their hands to the plough, was strongly urged by some of the elder knights of the council, and two or three high prelates, who had by this time entered to take share in the deliberations. The young knights, on the other hand, were fired with in-

indignation on hearing the manner in which their comrade had been treated; and few of them could think of missing a combat in the lists in a country in which such sights were so rare, and where one was to be fought so near them.

Godfrey rested his brow on his hand, and seemed in great perplexity. To break with the Greeks, after having suffered so many injuries in order to maintain the advantage of keeping the peace with them, seemed very impolitic, and a sacrifice of all he had obtained by a long course of painful forbearance towards Alexius Comnenus. On the other hand, he was bound as a man of honour to resent the injury offered to Count Robert of Paris, whose reckless spirit of chivalry made him the darling of the army. It was the cause, too, of a beautiful lady, and a brave one: Every knight in the host would think himself bound, by his vow, to hasten to her defence. When Godfrey spoke, it was to complain of the difficulty of the determination, and the short time there was to consider the case.

"With submission to my Lord Duke of Bouillon," said Tancred, "I was a knight ere I

was a crusader, and took on me the vows of chivalry, ere I placed this blessed sign upon my shoulder; the vow first made must be first discharged. I will therefore do penance for neglecting, for a space, the obligations of the second vow, while I observe that which recalls me to the first duty of knighthood,—the relief of a distressed lady in the hands of men whose conduct towards her, and towards this host, in every respect entitles me to call them treacherous faitours."

"If my kinsman Tancred," said Bohemond, "will check his impetuosity, and you, my lords, will listen, as you have sometimes deigned to do, to my advice, I think I can direct you how to keep clear of any breach of your oath, and yet fully to relieve our distressed fellow-pilgrims.—I see some suspicious looks are cast towards me, which are caused perhaps by the churlish manner in which this violent, and, in this case, almost insane young warrior, has protested against receiving my assistance. My great offence is the having given him warning, by precept and example, of the treachery which was about to be

practised against him, and instructed him to use forbearance and temperance. My warning he altogether contemned—my example he neglected to follow, and fell into the snare which was spread, as it were, before his very eyes. Yet the Count of Paris, in rashly contemning me, has acted only from a temper which misfortune and disappointment have rendered irrational and frantic. I am so far from bearing him ill-will, that, with your lordship's permission, and that of the present council, I will haste to the place of rendezvous with fifty lances, making up the retinue which attends upon each to at least ten men, which will make the stipulated auxiliary force equal to at least five hundred; and with these I can have little doubt of rescuing the Count and his lady."

"Nobly proposed," said the Duke of Bouillon; "and with a charitable forgiveness of injuries which becomes our Christian expedition. But thou hast forgot the main difficulty, brother Bohemond, that we are sworn never to turn back upon the sacred journey."

"If we can elude that oath upon the present occasion," said Bohemond, "it becomes our

duty to do so. Are we such bad horsemen, or are our steeds so awkward, that we cannot rein them back from this to the landing-place at Scutari? We can get them on shipboard in the same retrograde manner; and when we arrive in Europe, where our vow binds us no longer, the Count and Countess of Paris are rescued, and our vow remains entire in the Chancery of Heaven."

A general shout arose—"Long life to the gallant Bohemond!—Shame to us if we do not fly to the assistance of so valiant a knight, and a lady so lovely, since we can do so without breach of our vow."

"The question," said Godfrey, "appears to me to be eluded rather than solved; yet such evasions have been admitted by the most learned and scrupulous clerks; nor do I hesitate to admit of Bohemond's expedient, any more than if the enemy had attacked our rear, which might have occasioned our countermarching to be a case of absolute necessity."

Some there were in the assembly, particularly the churchmen, inclined to think that the oath

by which the crusaders had solemnly bound themselves, ought to be as literally obeyed. But Peter the Hermit, who had a place in the council, and possessed great weight, declared it as his opinion, "That since the precise observance of their vow would tend to diminish the forces of the crusade, it was in fact unlawful, and should not be kept according to the literal meaning, if, by a fair construction, it could be eluded."

He offered himself to back the animal which he bestrode—that is, his ass; and though he was diverted from showing this example by the remonstrances of Godfrey of Bouillon, who was afraid of his becoming a scandal in the eyes of the heathen, yet he so prevailed by his arguments, that the knights, far from scrupling to countermarch, eagerly contended which should have the honour of making one of the party which should retrograde to Constantinople, see the combat, and bring back to the host in safety the valorous Count of Paris, of whose victory no one doubted, and his Amazonian Countess.

This emulation was also put an end to by the authority of Godfrey, who himself selected the

fifty knights who were to compose the party. They were chosen from different nations, and the command of the whole was given to young Tancred of Otranto. Notwithstanding the claim of Bohemond, Godfrey detained the latter, under the pretext that his knowledge of the country and people was absolutely necessary to enable the council to form the plan of the campaign in Syria; but in reality he dreaded the selfishness of a man of great ingenuity as well as military skill, who, finding himself in a separate command, might be tempted, should opportunities arise, to enlarge his own power and dominion, at the expense of the pious purposes of the crusade in general. The younger men of the expedition were chiefly anxious to procure such horses as had been thoroughly trained, and could go through with ease and temper the manœuvre of equitation, by which it was designed to render legitimate the movement which they had recourse to. The selection was at length made, and the detachment ordered to draw up in the rear, or upon the eastward line of the Christian encampment. In the meanwhile, Godfrey

charged Bertha with a message for the Count of Paris, in which, slightly censuring him for not observing more caution in his intercourse with the Greeks, he informed him that he had sent a detachment of fifty lances, with the corresponding squires, pages, men-at-arms, and crossbows, five hundred in number, commanded by the valiant Tancred, to his assistance. The Duke also informed him, that he had added a suit of armour of the best temper Milan could afford, together with a trusty war-horse, which he entreated him to use upon the field of battle; for Bertha had not omitted to intimate Count Robert's want of the means of knightly equipment. The horse was brought before the pavilion accordingly, completely barbed or armed in steel, and laden with armour for the knight's body. Godfrey himself put the bridle into Bertha's hand.

"Thou need'st not fear to trust thyself with this steed, he is as gentle and docile as he is fleet and brave. Place thyself on his back, and take heed thou stir not from the side of the noble Prince Tancred of Otranto, who will be the

faithful defender of a maiden that has this day shown dexterity, courage, and fidelity."

Brenhild bowed low, as her cheeks glowed at praise from one whose talents and worth were in such general esteem, as to have raised him to that distinguished situation of leader of a host which numbered in it the bravest and most distinguished captains of Christendom.

"Who are you two persons?" continued Godfrey, speaking of the companions of Berthe, whom he saw in the distance before the tent.

"The one," answered the damsel, "is the master of the ferry-boat which brought me over; and the other, an old Varangian who came hither as my protector."

"As they may come to employ their eyes here, and their tongues on the opposite side," returned the General of the crusaders, "I do not think it prudent to let them accompany you. They shall remain here for some short time. The citizens of Scutari will not comprehend for some space what our intention is, and I could wish Prince Tancred and his attendants to be the first to announce their own arrival."

Bertha accordingly intimated the pleasure of the French general to the parties, without assigning his motives; when the ferryman began to exclaim on the hardship of interrupting him in his trade, and Osmund to complain of being detained from his duties. But Bertha, by the orders of Godfrey, left them, with the assurance that they would be soon at liberty. Finding themselves thus abandoned, each applied himself to his favourite amusement. The ferryman occupied himself in staring about at all that was new; and Osmund, having in the meantime accepted an offer of breakfast from some of the domestics, was presently engaged with a flask of such red wine as would have reconciled him to a worse lot than that which he at present experienced.

The detachment of Tancred, fifty spears and their armed retinue, which amounted fully to five hundred men, after having taken a short and hasty refreshment, were in arms and mounted before the sultry hour of noon. After some manœuvres, of which the Greeks of Scutari, whose curiosity was awakened by the preparations of the detachment, were at loss to comprehend the

purpose, they formed into a single column, having four men in front. When the horses were in this position, the whole riders at once began to rein back. The action was one to which both the cavaliers and their horses were well accustomed, nor did it at first afford much surprise to the spectators; but when the same retrograde evolution was continued, and the body of crusaders seemed about to enter the town of Scutari in so extraordinary a fashion, some idea of the truth began to occupy the citizens. The cry at length was general, when Tancred and a few others, whose horses were unusually well trained, arrived at the port, and possessed themselves of a galley, into which they led their horses, and, disregarding all opposition from the Imperial officers of the haven, pushed the vessel off from the shore.

Other cavaliers did not accomplish their purpose so easily; the riders, or the horses, were less accustomed to continue in the constrained pace for such a considerable length of time, so that many of the knights, having retrograded for one or two hundred yards, thought their vow was sufficiently observed by having so far deferred

to it, and riding in the ordinary manner into the town, seized without farther ceremony on some vessels, which, notwithstanding the orders of the Greek Emperor, had been allowed to remain on the Asiatic side of the strait. Some less able horsemen met with various accidents; for though it was a proverb of the time, that nothing was so bold as a blind horse, yet from this mode of equitation, where neither horse nor rider saw the way he was going, some steeds were overthrown, others backed upon dangerous obstacles; and the bones of the cavaliers themselves suffered much more than would have been the case in an ordinary march.

Those horsemen, also, who met with falls, incurred the danger of being slain by the Greeks, had not Godfrey, surmounting his religious scruples, dispatched a squadron to extricate them—a task which they performed with great ease. The greater part of Tancred's followers succeeded in embarking, as was intended, nor was there more than a score or two finally amissing. To accomplish their voyage, however, even the Prince of Otranto himself, and most of his followers, were

obliged to betake themselves to the unknightly labours of the oar. This they found extremely difficult, as well from the state both of the tide and the wind, as from the want of practice at the exercise. Godfrey in person viewed their progress anxiously from a neighbouring height, and perceived with regret the difficulty which they found in making their way, which was still more increased by the necessity for their keeping in a body, and waiting for the slowest and worst manned vessels, which considerably detained those that were more expeditious. They made some progress, however; nor had the commander-in-chief the least doubt, that before sunset they would safely reach the opposite side of the strait.

He retired at length from his post of observation, having placed a careful sentinel in his stead, with directions to bring him word the instant that the detachment reached the opposite shore. This the soldier could easily discern by the eye, if it was daylight at the time; if, on the contrary, it was night before they could arrive, the Prince of Otranto had orders to show certain lights, which,

in case of their meeting resistance from the Greeks, should be arranged in a peculiar manner, so as to indicate danger.

Godfrey then explained to the Greek authorities of Scutari, whom he summoned before him, the necessity there was that he should keep in readiness such vessels as could be procured, with which, in case of need, he was determined to transport a strong division from his army to support those who had gone before. He then rode back to his camp, the confused murmurs of which, rendered more noisy by the various discussions concerning the events of the day, rolled off from the numerous host of the crusaders, and mingled with the hoarse sound of the many-billowed Hellespont.

CHAPTER XIII.

All is prepared—the chambers of the mine
Are cramm'd with the combustible, which, harmless,
While yet unkindled, as the sable sand,
Needs but a spark to change its nature so,
That he who wakes it from its slumbrous mood
Dreads scarce the explosion less than he who knows
That 'tis his towers which meet its fury.

Anonymous.

When the sky is darkened suddenly, and the atmosphere grows thick and stifling, the lower ranks of creation entertain the ominous sense of a coming tempest. The birds fly to the thickets, the wild creatures retreat to the closest covers which their instinct gives them the habit of frequenting, and domestic animals show their apprehension of the approaching thunder-storm by singular actions and movements inferring fear and disturbance.

It seems that human nature, when its original habits are cultivated and attended to, possesses

something upon the same occasion of that prescient foreboding, which announces the approaching tempest to the inferior ranks of creation. The cultivation of our intellectual powers goes perhaps too far, when it teaches us entirely to suppress and disregard those natural feelings, which were originally designed as sentinels by which nature warned us of impending danger.

Something of the kind, however, still remains, and that species of feeling which announces to us sorrowful or alarming tidings, may be said, like the prophecies of the weird sisters, to come over us like a sudden cloud.

During the fatal day which was to precede the combat of the Cæsar with the Count of Paris, there were current through the city of Constantinople the most contradictory, and at the same time the most terrific reports. Privy conspiracy, it was alleged, was on the very eve of breaking out; open war, it was reported by others, was about to shake her banners over the devoted city; the precise cause was not agreed upon, any more than the nature of the enemy. Some said that the barbarians from the borders of Thracia, the

Hungarians, as they were termed, and the Comani, were on their march from the frontiers to surprise the city; another report stated that the Turks, who, during this period, were established in Asia, had resolved to prevent the threatened attack of the crusaders upon Palestine, by surprising not only the Western Pilgrims, but the Christians of the East, by one of their innumerable invasions, executed with their characteristic rapidity.

Another report, approaching more near to the truth, declared that the crusaders themselves, having discovered their various causes of complaint against Alexius Comnenus, had resolved to march back their united forces to the capital, with a view of dethroning or chastising him; and the citizens were dreadfully alarmed for the consequences of the resentment of men so fierce in their habits, and so strange in their manners. In short, although they did not all agree on the precise cause of danger, it was yet generally allowed that something of a dreadful kind was impending, which appeared to be in a certain degree confirmed by the motions that were

taking place among the troops. The Varangians, as well as the Immortals, were gradually assembled, and placed in occupation of the strongest parts of the city, until at length the fleet of galleys, row boats, and transports, occupied by Tancred and his party, were observed to put themselves in motion from Scutari, and attempt to gain such a height in the narrow sea, as upon the turn of the tide should transport them to the port of the capital.

Alexius Comnenus was himself struck at this unexpected movement on the part of the crusaders. Yet, after some conversation with Hereward, on whom he had determined to repose his confidence, and had now gone too far to retreat, he became reassured, the more especially by the limited size of the detachment which seemed to meditate so bold a measure as an attack upon his capital. To those around him he said with carelessness, that it was hardly to be supposed that a trumpet could blow to the charge, within hearing of the crusaders' camp, without some out of so many knights coming forth to see the cause and the issue of the conflict.

The conspirators also had their secret fears when the little armament of Tancred had been seen on the Straits. Agelastes mounted a mule, and went to the shore of the sea, at the place now called Galata. He met Bertha's old ferryman, whom Godfrey had set at liberty, partly in contempt, and partly that the report he was likely to make, might serve to amuse the conspirators in the city. Closely examined by Agelastes, he confessed that the present detachment, so far as he understood, was dispatched at the instance of Bohemond, and was under the command of his kinsman Tancred, whose well-known banner was floating from the headmost vessel. This gave courage to Agelastes, who, in the course of his intrigues, had opened a private communication with the wily and ever mercenary Prince of Antioch. The object of the philosopher had been to obtain from Bohemond a body of his followers to co-operate in the intended conspiracy, and fortify the party of insurgents. It is true, that Bohemond had returned no answer, but the account now given by the ferryman, and the sight of Tancred the kinsman of Bohemond's

banner, displayed on the straits, satisfied the philosopher that his offers, his presents, and his promises, had gained to his side the avaricious Italian, and that this band had been selected by Bohemond, and were coming to act in his favour.

As Agelastes turned to go off, he almost jostled a person, as much muffled up, and apparently as unwilling to be known, as the philosopher himself. Alexius Comnenus, however—for it was the Emperor himself—knew Agelastes, though rather from his stature and gestures, than his countenance; and could not forbear whispering in his ear, as he passed, the well-known lines, to which the pretended sage's various acquisitions gave some degree of point:—

> "Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, alipes,
> Augur, schœnobates, medicus, magus; omnia novit
> Græculus esuriens, in cœlum jusseris ibit."

Agelastes first started at the unexpected sound of the Emperor's voice, yet immediately recovered presence of mind, the want of which had made him suspect himself betrayed; and, without taking notice of the rank of the person to

whom he spoke, he could not forbear answering by a quotation which should return the alarm he had received. The speech that suggested itself was said to be that which the Phantom of Cleonice dinned into the ears of the tyrant who murdered her—

"Tu cole justitiam; teque atque alios manet ultor."

The sentence, and the recollections which accompanied it, thrilled through the heart of the Emperor, who walked on, however, without any notice or reply.

"The vile conspirator," he said, "had his associates around him, otherwise he had not hazarded that threat. Or it may have been worse —Agelastes himself, on the very brink of this world, may have obtained that singular glance into futurity proper to that situation, and perhaps speaks less from his own reflection than from a strange spirit of prescience, which dictates his words. Have I then in earnest sinned so far in my imperial duty, as to make it just to apply to me the warning used by the injured Cleonice to her ravisher and murderer? Methinks I have not. Methinks, that at less ex-

pense than that of a just severity, I could ill have kept my seat in the high place where Heaven has been pleased to seat me, and where, as a ruler, I am bound to maintain my station. Methinks the sum of those who have experienced my clemency may be well numbered with that of such as have sustained the deserved punishments of their guilt.—But has that vengeance, however deserved in itself, been always taken in a legal or justifiable manner? My conscience, I doubt, will hardly answer so home a question; and where is the man, had he the virtues of Antoninus himself, that can hold so high and responsible a place, yet sustain such an interrogation as is implied in that sort of warning which I have received from this traitor? *Tu cole justitiam*—we all need to use justice to others—*Teque atque alios manet ultor*—we are all amenable to an avenging being—I will see the Patriarch—instantly will I see him; and by confessing my transgressions to the church, I will, by her plenary indulgence, acquire the right of spending the last day of my reign in a consciousness of innocence, or at least of pardon,—a state

of mind rarely the lot of those whose lines have fallen in lofty places."

So saying, he passed to the palace of Zosimus the Patriarch, to whom he could unbosom himself with more safety, because he had long considered Agelastes as a private enemy to the church, and a man attached to the ancient doctrines of heathenism. In the councils of the state they were also opposed to each other, nor did the Emperor doubt, that in communicating the secret of the conspiracy to the Patriarch, he was sure to attain a loyal and firm supporter in the defence which he proposed to himself. He therefore gave a signal by a low whistle, and a confidential officer, well mounted, approached him, who attended him in his ride, though unostentatiously, and at some distance.

In this manner, therefore, Alexius Comnenus proceeded to the palace of the Patriarch, with as much speed as was consistent with his purpose of avoiding to attract any particular notice as he passed through the street. During the whole ride, the warning of Agelastes repeatedly occurred to him, and his conscience reminded him of

too many actions of his reign which could only be justified by necessity, emphatically said to be the tyrant's plea, and which were of themselves deserving the dire vengeance so long delayed.

When he came in sight of the splendid towers which adorned the front of the patriarchal palace, he turned aside from the lofty gates, repaired to a narrow court, and again giving his mule to his attendant, he stopt before a postern, whose low arch and humble architrave seemed to exclude the possibility of its leading to any place of importance. On knocking, however, a priest of an inferior order opened the door, who, with a deep reverence, received the Emperor so soon as he had made himself known, and conducted him into the interior of the palace. Demanding a secret interview with the Patriarch, Alexius was then ushered into his private library, where he was received by the aged priest with the deepest respect, which the nature of his communication soon changed into horror and astonishment.

Although Alexius was supposed by many of

his own court, and particularly by some members of his own family, to be little better than a hypocrite in his religious professions, yet such severe observers were unjust in branding him with a name so odious. He was indeed aware of the great support which he received from the good opinion of the clergy, and to them he was willing to make sacrifices for the advantage of the church, or of individual prelates who manifested fidelity to the crown; but though, on the one hand, such sacrifices were rarely made by Alexius without a view to temporal policy, yet, on the other, he regarded them as recommended by his devotional feelings, and took credit to himself for various grants and actions, as dictated by sincere piety, which, in another aspect, were the fruits of temporal policy. His mode of looking on these measures was that of a person with oblique vision, who sees an object in a different manner, according to the point from which he chances to contemplate it.

The Emperor placed his own errors of government before the Patriarch in his confession, giving due weight to every breach of morality as it oc-

curred, and stripping from them the lineaments and palliative circumstances which had in his own imagination lessened their guilt. The Patriarch heard, to his astonishment, the real thread of many a court intrigue, which had borne a very different appearance, till the Emperor's narrative either justified his conduct upon the occasion, or left it totally unjustifiable. Upon the whole, the balance was certainly more in favour of Alexius than the Patriarch had supposed likely in that more distant view he had taken of the intrigues of the court, when, as usual, the ministers and the courtiers endeavoured to make up for the applause which they had given in council to the most blameable actions of the absolute monarch, by elsewhere imputing to his motives greater guilt than really belonged to them. Many men who had fallen sacrifices, it was supposed, to the personal spleen or jealousy of the Emperor, appeared to have been in fact removed from life, or from liberty, because their enjoying either was inconsistent with the quiet of the state and the safety of the monarch.

Zosimus also learned, what he perhaps already

suspected, that amidst the profound silence of despotism which seemed to pervade the Grecian empire, it heaved frequently with convulsive throes, which ever and anon made obvious the existence of a volcano under the surface. Thus, while smaller delinquencies, or avowed discontent with the Imperial government, seldom occurred, and were severely punished when they did, the deepest and most mortal conspiracies against the life and the authority of the Emperor were cherished by those nearest to his person; and he was often himself aware of them, though it was not until they approached an explosion that he dared act upon his knowledge, and punish the conspirators.

The whole treason of the Cæsar, with his associates, Agelastes and Achilles Tatius, was heard by the Patriarch with wonder and astonishment, and he was particularly surprised at the dexterity with which the Emperor, knowing the existence of so dangerous a conspiracy at home, had been able to parry the danger from the crusaders occurring at the same moment.

"In that respect," said the Emperor, to whom

indeed the churchman hinted his surprise, "I have been singularly unfortunate. Had I been secure of the forces of my own empire, I might have taken one out of two manly and open courses with these frantic warriors of the west—I might, my reverend father, have devoted the sums paid to Bohemond and other of the more selfish among the crusaders, to the honest and open support of the army of western Christians, and safely transported them to Palestine, without exposing them to the great loss which they are likely to sustain by the opposition of the Infidels; their success would have been in fact my own, and a Latin kingdom in Palestine, defended by its steel-clad warriors, would have been a safe and unexpugnable barrier of the empire against the Saracens. Or, if it was thought more expedient for the protection of the empire and the holy church, over which you are ruler, we might at once, and by open force, have defended the frontiers of our states against a host commanded by so many different and discording chiefs, and advancing upon us with such equivocal intentions. If the first swarm of these

locusts, under him whom they called Walter the Pennyless, was thinned by the Hungarians, and totally destroyed by the Turks, as the pyramid of bones on the frontiers of the country still keep in memory, surely the united forces of the Grecian empire would have had little difficulty in scattering this second flight, though commanded by these Godfreys, Bohemonds, and Tancreds."

The Patriarch was silent, for though he disliked, or rather detested the crusaders, as members of the Latin church, he yet thought it highly doubtful that in feats of battle they could have been met and overcome by the Grecian forces.

"At any rate," said Alexius, rightly interpreting his silence, "if vanquished, I had fallen under my shield as a Greek emperor should, nor had I been forced into these mean measures of attacking men by stealth, and with forces disguised as infidels; while the lives of the faithful soldiers of the empire, who have fallen in obscure skirmishes, had better, both for them and me, been lost bravely in their ranks, avowedly fighting for their native emperor and their native

country. Now, and as the matter stands, I shall be handed down to posterity as a wily tyrant, who engaged his subjects in fatal feuds for the safety of his own obscure life. Patriarch! these crimes rest not with me, but with the rebels whose intrigues compelled me into such courses —What, reverend father, will be my fate hereafter?—and in what light shall I descend to posterity, the author of so many disasters?"

"For futurity," said the Patriarch, "your grace hath referred yourself to the holy church, which hath power to bind and to loose; your means of propitiating her are ample, and I have already indicated such as she may reasonably expect, in consequence of your repentance and forgiveness."

"They shall be granted," replied the Emperor, "in their fullest extent; nor will I injure you in doubting their effect in the next world. In this present state of existence, however, the favourable opinion of the church may do much for me during this important crisis. If we understand each other, good Zosimus, her doctors and bishops are to thunder in my behalf,

nor is my benefit from her pardon to be deferred till the funeral monument closes upon me?"

"Certainly not," said Zosimus; "the conditions which I have already stipulated being strictly attended to."

"And my memory in history," said Alexius, "in what manner is that to be preserved?"

"For that," answered the Patriarch, "your Imperial Majesty must trust to the filial piety and literary talents of your accomplished daughter, Anna Comnena."

The Emperor shook his head. "This unhappy Cæsar," he said, "is like to make a quarrel between us; for I shall scarce pardon so ungrateful a rebel as he is, because my daughter clings to him with a woman's fondness. Besides, good Zosimus, it is not, I believe, the page of a historian such as my daughter that is most likely to be received without challenge by posterity. Some Procopius, some philosophical slave, starving in a garret, aspires to write the life of an Emperor whom he durst not approach; and although the principal merit of his production be, that it contains particulars upon the subject

which no man durst have promulgated while the prince was living, yet no man hesitates to admit such as true when he has passed from the scene."

"On that subject," said Zosimus, "I can neither afford your Imperial Majesty relief or protection. If, however, your memory is unjustly slandered upon earth, it will be a matter of indifference to your Highness, who will be then, I trust, enjoying a state of beatitude which idle slander cannot assail. The only way, indeed, to avoid it, while on this side of time, would be to write your Majesty's own memoirs while you are yet in the body; so convinced am I that it is in your power to assign legitimate excuses for those actions of your life, which, without your doing so, would seem most worthy of censure."

"Change we the subject," said the Emperor; "and since the danger is imminent, let us take care for the present, and leave future ages to judge for themselves.—What circumstance is it, reverend father, in your opinion, which encourages these conspirators to make so audacious

an appeal to the populace and the Grecian soldiers?"

"Certainly," answered the Patriarch, "the most irritating incident of your highness's reign was the fate of Ursel, who, submitting, it is said, upon capitulation, for life, limb, and liberty, was starved to death by your orders, in the dungeons of the Blacquernal, and whose courage, liberality, and other popular virtues, are still fondly remembered by the citizens of this metropolis, and by the soldiers of the guard, called Immortal."

"And this," said the Emperor, fixing his eye upon his confessor, "your reverence esteems actually the most dangerous point of the popular tumult?"

"I cannot doubt," said the Patriarch, "that his very name, boldly pronounced, and artfully repeated, will be the watchword, as has been plotted, of a horrible tumult."

"I thank Heaven!" said the Emperor; "on that particular I will be on my guard. Good-night to your reverence! and, believe me, that all in this scroll, to which I have set my hand,

shall be with the utmost fidelity accomplished. Be not, however, over impatient in this business;—such a shower of benefits falling at once upon the church, would make men suspicious that the prelates and ministers proceeded rather as acting upon a bargain between the Emperor and Patriarch, than as paying or receiving an atonement offered by a sinner in excuse of his crimes. This would be injurious, father, both to yourself and me."

"All regular delay," said the Patriarch, "shall be interposed at your highness's pleasure; and we shall trust to you for recollection that the bargain, if it could be termed one, was of your own seeking, and that the benefit to the church was contingent upon the pardon and the support which she has afforded to your majesty."

"True," said the Emperor—"most true—nor shall I forget it. Once more, adieu! and forget not what I have told thee. This is a night, Zosimus, in which the Emperor must toil like a slave, if he means not to return to the

humble Alexius Comnenus, and even then there were no resting-place."

So saying, he took leave of the Patriarch, who was highly gratified with the advantages he had obtained for the church, which many of his predecessors had struggled for in vain. He resolved, therefore, to support the staggering Alexius.

END OF VOLUME SECOND.

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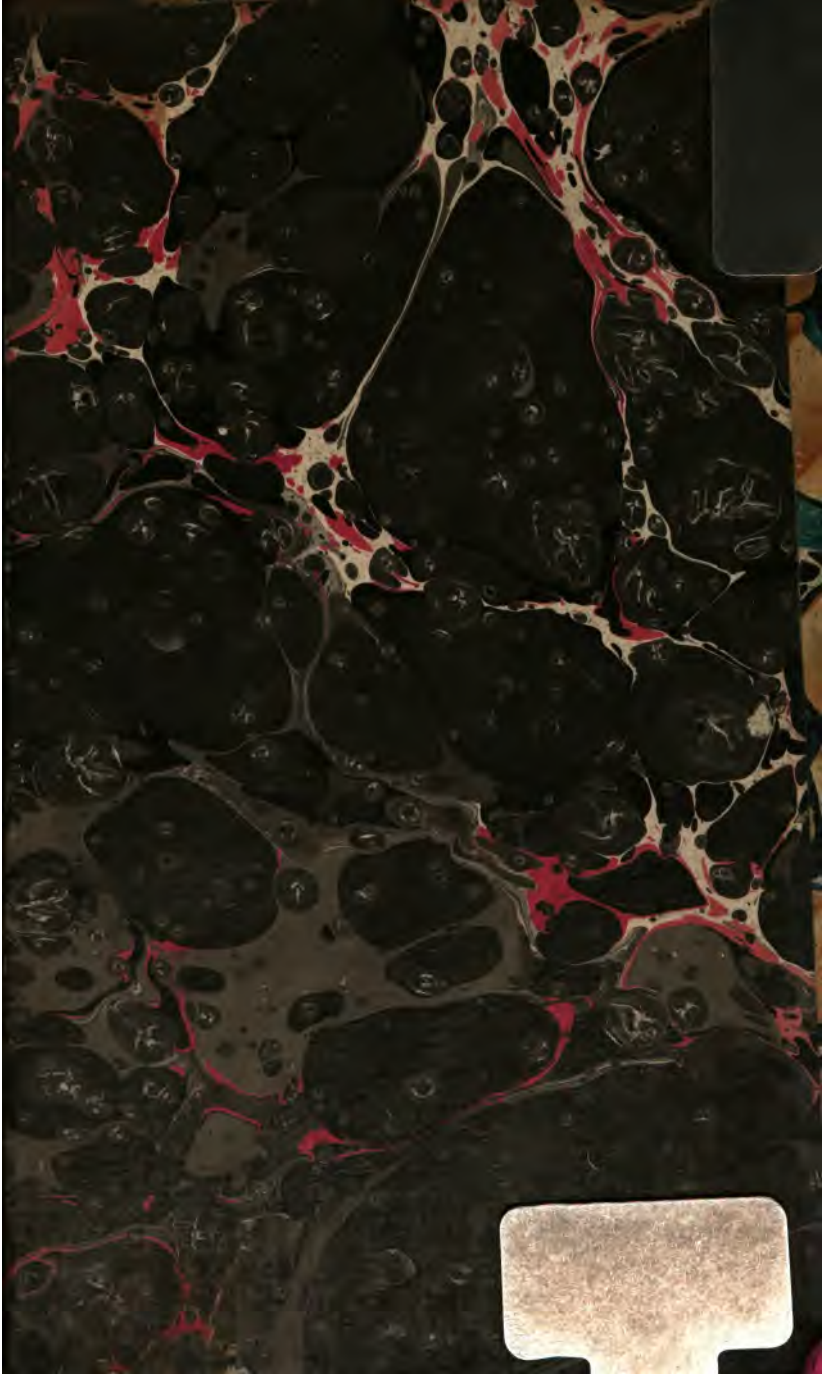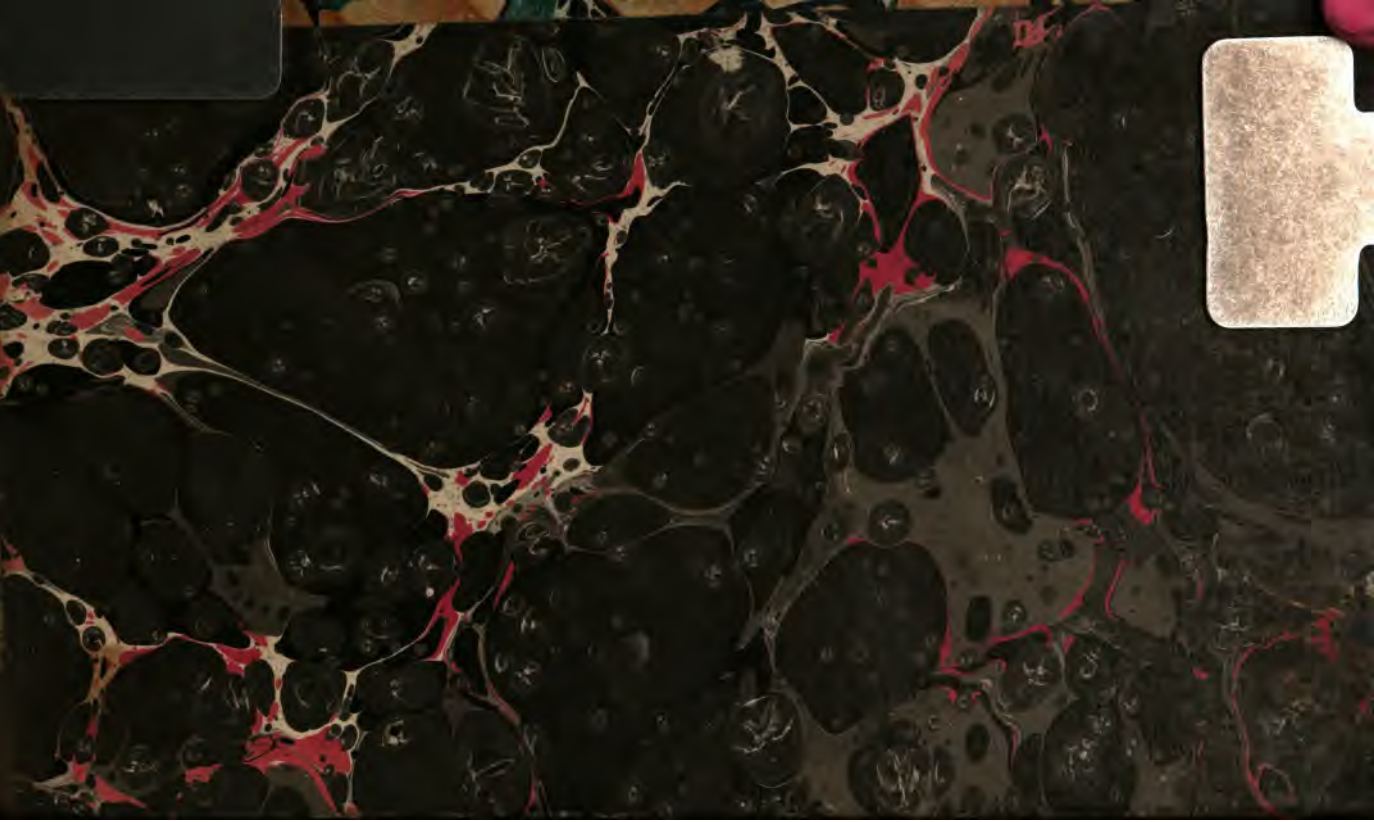
Page 30, fourth line from top, *for* cost *read* nest.
—— 139, thirteenth line from foot, for *pruchie* read *psyche.*
—— 227, ninth line from foot, *for* Hampton *read* Hampshire.